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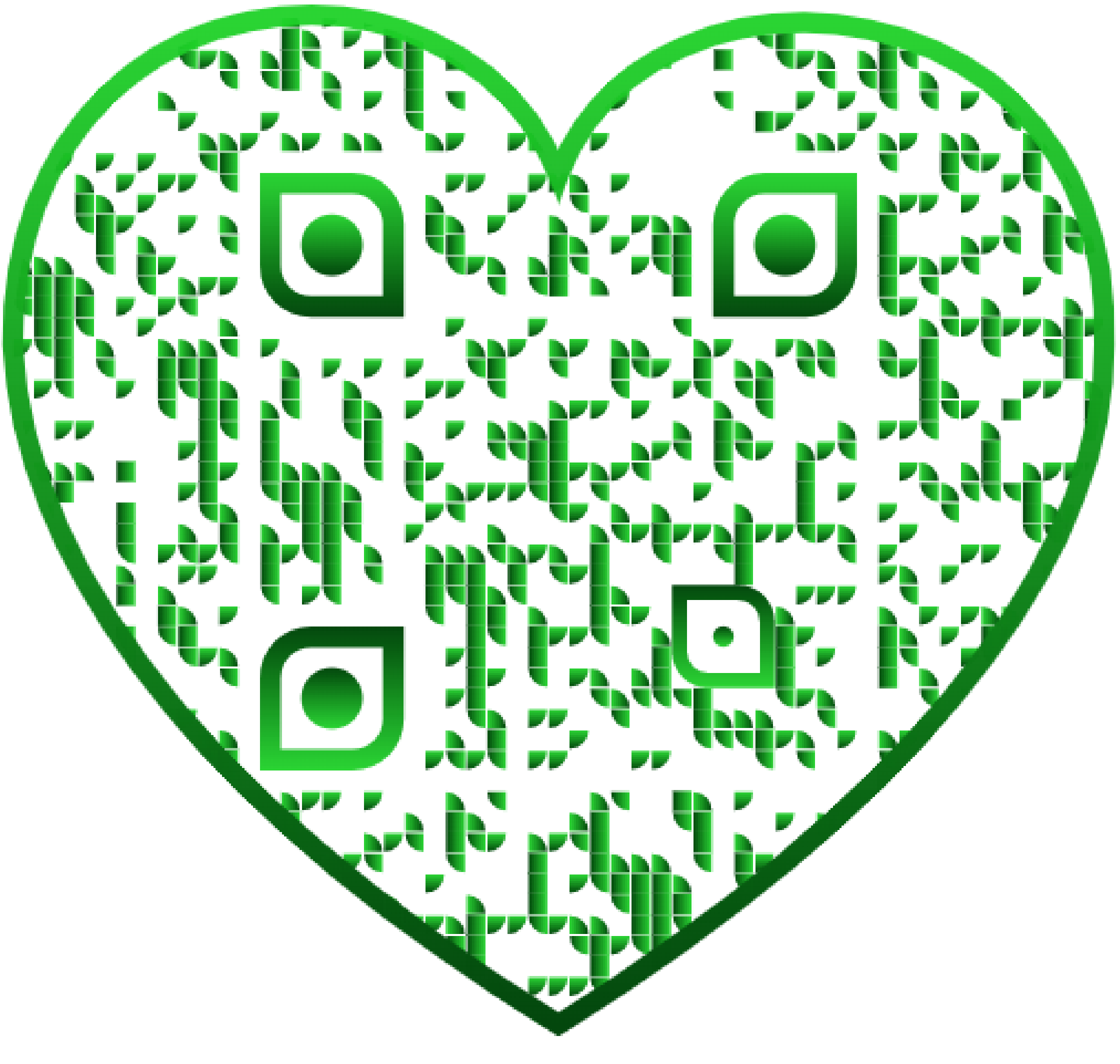

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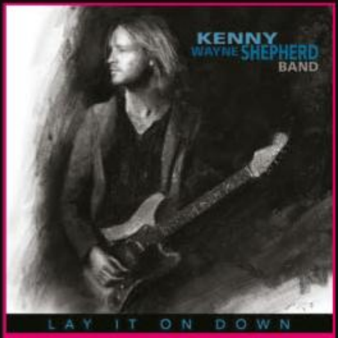

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44

Queen

The making of the career-saving *News Of The World.*

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Contents

AUGUST 2017 **ISSUE 239**

Features

32 Mid-year preview
There have already been some great rock albums released this year, but they're only the start. We look ahead at some of the highly anticipated records still to come in 2017, including...

32 Black Country Communion
We kick things off by catching up with Glenn Hughes, as he, Joe Bonamassa and co. prepare for their return.

34 Living Colour
Politically charged and potent, their new album is attuned to events in the present while inspired by music from the past.

36 Tax The Heat
The sharp-suited West Country rockers return with more classy, hard-hitting rock'n'roll.

38 Alter Bridge
With a new mega live album (including rarities) and shows at London's Royal Albert Hall on the way, it's a busy time for Myles Kennedy and co.

40 Monster Truck
"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," say the hard-rocking Canadians, as they finesse their established formula on new LP.

42 Queen
In the autumn of 1977, it looked as if the band's reign might be over. Instead they hit back with the globally successful *News Of The World* and ruled once more.

50 A Thousand Horses
We caught up with the southern, Skynyrd-esque bright sparks as they release their brand new record.

52 Led Zeppelin
The story of how *Presence*, the band's seventh studio album, climbed out of the wreckage of potential disaster.

60 John Lydon
Never trust the music industry or nuns. Question everything. Religion is pollution. You don't have to hate your bandmates. These and more help shape the former Sex Pistol's world view.

64 Foreigner
An exclusive extract from Mick Jones's new autobiography, written with *Classic Rock*'s Paul Rees.

70 Necromandus
Meet possibly the best band ever to have completely missed the boat when their ship really should have steamed in.

74 Styx
After 14 album-free years, they've surprised everyone by releasing a new album. The other surprise is that it's rather good.

78 Biters
We take the Atlanta rockers vinyl shopping, give them 50 quid and see what fantastic plastic they spend it on.

128 Helloween
The full story – guaranteed gremlin-free this time!

Contents

AUGUST 2017 **ISSUE 239**

64

Foreigner

"The only bands that were up with us were the Eagles with *Hotel California* and Fleetwood Mac with *Rumours*."

GETTY

Regulars

14 The Dirt
Lost footage of Led Zeppelin at 1970 Bath Festival found; Journey men Schon and Cain at loggerheads; Team Rock Radio makes a triumphant return... Say hello to Shaman's Harvest and Koyo, Welcome back Amplifier, Rex Brown and Peter Perrett, say goodbye to Anita Pallenberg, Rosalie Sorrels, Les Payne...

21 Raw Power
The new Dean From Hell replica guitar honours former Pantera guitarist the late Darrell 'Dimebag' Abbott.

26 The Stories Behind The Songs
Genesis
A four-minute 'pop' song rather than a complex prog epic, *Follow You Follow Me* opened the door to megastardom.

28 Q&A
Fish
Marillion's former frontman looks back on the band's commercial peak: *Misplaced Childhood.*

30 Six Things You Should Know About...
Kenny Wayne Shepherd
The musician who helped bring the blues into the present reckons now is a "fantastic time" for the genre.

83 Reviews
New albums from Alice Cooper, Chris Robinson Brotherhood, Robin Trower, Accept, Blackwater Conspiracy, Prong, Cock Sparrer, Quiet Riot... Reissues from Marillion, Kiss, Glenn Hughes, ELP, 10cc, Allman Brothers, Samson, Rolling Stones, Bill Nelson... DVDs, films and books on Guns N' Roses, Joe Bonamassa, Manic Street Preachers, Eagles Of Death Metal Live reviews of Guns N' Roses, King's X, Prophets Of Rage, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, Mark Lanegan...

102 Buyer's Guide
Saxon
South Yorkshire's NWOBHM pioneers have recorded some of heavy metal's defining albums. But which are their best?

108 Live Previews
Must-see gigs from Graham Bonnet, Dokken and Climax Blues Band. Plus full gig listings – find out who's playing where and when.

130 Heavy Load
Mike Portnoy
"Hearing Dream Theater without me still hurts." The former DT drummer on being a control freak, booze and having to choose between playing with Rush or Paul McCartney.

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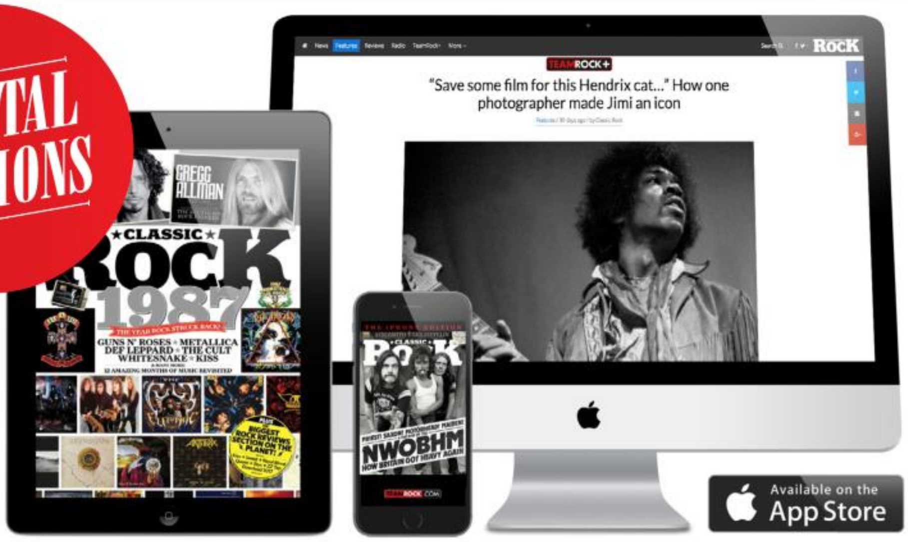

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SO WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE?
IRON MAIDEN '84 - THE CLASSIC POLAND TOUR REVISITED
JUDAS PRIEST'S DARKEST HOUR - HOW PRIEST SURVIVED ROB HALFORD'S DEPARTURE
JOHN SYKES ON THE DIFFICULT BIRTH OF WHITESNAKE'S 1987 CLASSIC
UFO - THE CLASSIC ERA BY PETE WAY
ANGEL - THEY COULD HAVE BEEN AS BIG AS KISS!
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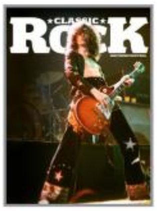
Not a week goes by at *Classic Rock* HQ without someone – usually me, if we're naming names – asking: how can it possibly be XX years since XX album was release?! Queen was the subject of such an exclamation a couple of months ago, as we realised that this year *News Of The World* celebrates its 40th anniversary. Seriously, how did that happen?!

So this issue, as Queen + Adam Lambert begin their monster US tour, we're venturing back to the mid-70s to take a look at the making of that album, the record that gave the world the stone-cold classics *We Will Rock You* and *We Are The Champions*. We also stick around in the 70s and take you back to 1975 to revisit Led Zeppelin, when they were on top of the world and unstoppable... and then things went terribly awry. We take you behind the scenes to those turbulent times and the making one of Jimmy Page's favourite Zep albums, *Presence*.

While I have you, if you're a regular reader and eagle-eyed, you might have spotted a slight SNAFU last issue: somehow a production gremlin sneaked in and wreaked havoc with the final page of our Helloween feature. Sorry about that, but we've reprinted it (starting on page 128) so you can finish your read. And if you didn't get last issue, you can enjoy it anew!



Siân Llewellyn,
Editor

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This month's contributors

LOUISE BROCK
Design whizz Louise was Deputy Art Editor on *CR*'s sister title *Metal Hammer* before braving the big bad world and going freelance at the end of last year. She has also worked for *Total Film* and *Notion*, among many other outlets, and her art-editing expertise can be seen on many pages this issue (too many to list here!).

RICH CHAMBERLAIN
Raised on his dad's AC/DC LPs as a kid, *CR* regular Rich dreamed of being the next Phil Rudd. Twenty years on he can still be heard occasionally murdering *Whole Lotta Rosie*, but today you'll find him interviewing rock greats rather than sharing a stage with them. This month he interviews Rex Brown and a whole host of bands for our Ultimate Preview feature.

MICK WALL
Mick Wall is a former Editor In Chief of *Classic Rock*, author and well-known rock writer. This issue he takes us back in inimitable style to the mid-70s with Queen and Led Zeppelin. The new paperback – complete with updated chapter - of his brilliant Guns N' Roses biography *Last Of The Giants* is out now, published by Trapeze.

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF ROCK

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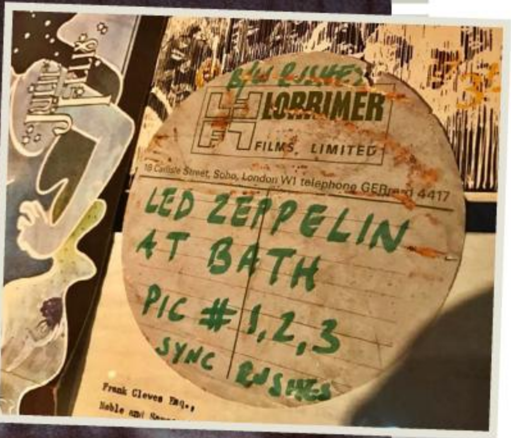
SET-LIST

Bath, 1970

Immigrant Song *(debut live performance)*
Heartbreaker
Dazed And Confused
Bring It On Home
Since I've Been Loving You
Thank You
That's The Way
What Is And What
Should Never Be
Moby Dick
How Many More Times
Whole Lotta Love
Medley:
Long Tall Sally/Say Mama/
Johnny B Goode/That's
Alright Mama



Plant and Page at the 1970 Bath Festival. Inset: a box of film rushes of their performance.

MAIN PIC: GETTY. INSET & RIGHT: DAVID WILSON CLARKE

'Lost' Led Zeppelin film found

Footage of band's 1970 Bath Festival performance unearthed.

Unseen film of Led Zeppelin playing at the 1970 Bath Festival – thrown away nearly 50 years ago, and widely thought to be lost – has been unearthed in a British university film archive. Experts are now hoping to digitally restore the footage, and it's hoped that it will be released to mark the 50th anniversary of what is widely considered to be one of the most important performances of the band's career.

The 1970 Bath Festival Of Blues And Progressive Music (which took place not in Bath, but close by in Shepton Mallet) was a two-day event featuring Zeppelin, who headlined the Saturday, Pink Floyd, The Byrds, Santana, Johnny Winter, Canned Heat and many more.

The plan – agreed by the band and their fiercely protective manager, Peter Grant – was that filmmaker Peter Whitehead would shoot the concert and interview the band and the footage would be released. But Whitehead got to the festival late, and missed shooting the band arriving by helicopter. For Zeppelin's performance, he was shooting into the sun, so footage was so dark that both Whitehead and the band deemed it unusable. The rushes were discarded, and presumed lost. Until now.

Earlier this year, De Montfort University in Leicester acquired the Peter Whitehead archive. A member of the 60s counter culture, Whitehead made many avant-garde films and shot numerous band videos for *Top Of The Pops*. He shot Zeppelin at the Royal Albert Hall earlier in 1970, filmed *Tonite Let's All Make Love In London* – a celebration of swinging London in the 60s – and the early Rolling Stones rockumentary *Charlie Is My Darling*.

Today Peter Whitehead is in ill health, living in Northamptonshire. His son, Dr Harry Whitehead, a novelist and professor of creative writing, said his father rarely spoke of his band work. "I don't think he ever thought the band stuff was in any way important," he says. "He liked his books, his avant-garde films. That's what he thought mattered. He never considered the band footage artistically important."

When it was decided to can the Zeppelin footage, Whitehead shrugged and moved on to his next project.

But Zeppelin's 1970 Bath Festival performance is historically important. It was thought by critics – and the band themselves – to be one of the most important shows of their career. A crowd of around 200,000 were there to witness the performance in which the band played for three hours, including five encores.

"There's a lot of interesting stuff in the archive, but the Bath Festival footage was a pleasant surprise," says Steve Chibnall, a Professor of British Cinema at De Montfort University and the curator of the Peter Whitehead archive.

Steve Chibnall, a Professor of British Cinema at De Montfort University, and (below) filmmaker Peter Whitehead.

"Peter was obviously trusted by the band and Peter Grant and he managed to secure tremendous access – he's on stage, backstage, interviewing the band, the other acts, the crowd.

"I know he was unhappy with the footage, that he thought it was too dark, but, let me tell you, I've seen it. Some of it is too dark, yes, but I think we can rescue that.

"There's a limit to what we can do, obviously, but we have the technology to make it lighter, better, clearer. And a lot of it, before the sun sets, is perfectly fine."

> **"I've seen it. Some of it is too dark, yes, but I think we can rescue that."**
>
> **Professor Steve Chibnall**

The film lasts for about 30 minutes and is in full colour. However, there is no sound.

"I don't think that's too much of a problem," says Prof Chibnall. "There are existing sound recordings from that show. It's not beyond us to marry the soundtrack and the film.

"I'm by no means a Led Zeppelin expert, but I've seen parts of the film with Jimmy Page and his bow, and I suspect at some point they're playing *Moby Dick*, with the drum solo, which Bonham plays with his hands.

"What we need to do now is talk to Zeppelin's management, find out who owns the copyright, and see if we can work on this, improve it and get it realised in time for the 50th anniversary of the festival. That would be nice, wouldn't it?"

Dave Lewis, editor of Led Zeppelin magazine *Tight But Loose*, was aware that film existed of the band's 1970 Bath festival performance, but he never met, or heard of, anyone who had seen it.

"It's historically very important," he says. "It was a turning point for the band – their biggest UK show, five encores, great reviews, the first time they played acoustically (they played *That's The Way*, from *Led Zep III*) and it set them up for the rest of their career, really.

"I'd love to see it. I know a lot of people would," Lewis enthuses. "There's clearly a lot of work to be done yet – not least that Jimmy Page would have to agree to it – but I hope something can be done." **LM**

This month The Dirt was compiled by Simon Bradley, Rich Chamberlain, Lee Dorrian, Jamie Hibbard, Rob Hughes, Dave Ling, Lee Marlow, Grant Moon, Will Simpson

the DIRT

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

Rosalie Sorrels
June 24, 1933 – June 11, 2017

From Boise, Idaho, Rosalie Sorrels was a Grammy-nominated folk singer-songwriter, social activist and author, with a catalogue of more than 20 albums. Her first major gig was at the Newport Folk Festival in 1966. Long-since retired, she was 83.

Anita Pallenberg
April 6, 1942 – June 13, 2017

An Italian-German actress who appeared in the films *Barbarella* and *Performance*, among others, and a former girlfriend of Keith Richards, Anita Pallenberg (credited as "the muse of the Rolling Stones") has died at the age of 73.

Dave 'Shirt' Nicholls
May 8, 1965 – May 24, 2017

West-Midlander Dave Nicholls was a sound engineer who worked with Saxon, Diamond Head, Thin Lizzy, Slipknot and many more. "There are insufficient words to express this loss," said a statement from Slipknot. "Shirt was a family man, a good friend, a musician, and he dedicated his life to rock'n'roll music." He was 52.

Les Payne
Died May 1, 2017

A popular musician on the scene in High Wycombe, Payne also produced Marillion's first three-song demo tape. The 74-year-old died of unspecified causes. "He will be missed by many, especially in the Aylesbury and Bucks community where he was a legend," says Fish.

Belton Richard
October 5, 1939 – June 21, 2017

Born in Rayne, Louisiana, Richard was a Cajun accordionist and vocalist renowned for his baritone range. His mix of swamp-rock, rock'n'roll and country made him widely imitated. The 77-year-old had recently been hospitalised with pneumonia.

Sheila Raye Charles
Died June 17, 2017

One of Ray Charles's 12 children, Sheila Raye, 53, has succumbed to breast cancer. Born Sheila Jean Robinson, she was raised by her mother and didn't meet her dad until she was 14. She became a singer-songwriter, and in 1990 was voted New Artist Of The Year at the Minnesota Black Music Awards.

NEWS

Joe Bonamassa, **John Mayall**, **Randy Bachman**, **Kenny Wayne Shepherd**, **Edgar Winter**, **Warren Haynes** and **Robben Ford** are among the many guests on **Walter Trout**'s new record, *We're All In This Together*. His 26th album, it's due on September 1 via Provogue Records.

The West End run of Jim Steinman's **Bat Out Of Hell – The Musical** has been extended to August 5 due to public demand. It's on at the London Coliseum in St Martin's Lane.

Lionheart, the newly reunited melodic hard rockers featuring former Iron Maiden guitarist Dennis Stratton, release *Second Nature*, their first album in 32 years, via AOR Heaven on August 25. The vocalist on the record is newcomer Lee Small (Shy, Phenomena, Skyscraper).

Swedish melodic hard rockers **H.e.a.t** (pictured) release their fifth album, *Into The Great Unknown*, on September 22 via Gain/Sony. It includes the tracks *Eye Of The Storm*, *Bastard Of Society* and *Shit City*.

Alice Cooper's November tour of the UK will feature guest appearances by the three surviving members of the original Alice Cooper band (guitarist Glen Buxton died in 1997). Rhythm guitarist Michael Bruce, bassist Dennis Dunaway drummer and Neal Smith, who all appear on Cooper's upcoming album *Paranormal* (reviewed on page 84), will perform mini-sets each night.

Band tensions: Jonathan Cain (left) and Neal Schon.

Journey in crisis

Schon-Cain rift threatens the band's future.

As this issue went to press, a growing feud between Journey members Neal Schon and Jonathan Cain appeared to threaten the future of the group, with guitarist Schon saying of keyboardist/rhythm guitarist Cain: "I want to be elevated by whom I play with, not feel like I've got cement shoes," and issuing the not-so-veiled threat: "If anyone is unhappy they are not running my band then they should leave."

One can only imagine the tensions within Journey's dressing room as the band continue their North American tour. The stand-off comes just months after Journey were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame.

A growing tension with Cain's wife, Paula White-Cain, a minister who delivered the invocation at Donald Trump's presidential inauguration, has prompted a series of provocative Tweets from Schon.

"[The mix of religion and politics] has been an issue with myself, Mr Cain and his now wife since he married," said one. "I've fought to protect the brand I built with Steve Perry, way before Gregg [Rolie] and I picked Cain to replace Rolie… Frankly, I'm tired of having to defend all by myself. [Fellow co-founding Journey member] Ross [Valory] is no help."

Cain joined Journey from The Babys in 1980, and had a hand in many of their best-loved songs, notably *Faithfully* (which he wrote alone) and, along with Schon, *Send Her My Love*, *Who's Crying Now* and the all-conquering *Don't Stop Believing*. And yet Schon accuses Cain of "convenient amnesia" regarding his own role as the band's leader. "As Jon Cain said to me when we rebuilt [this band]: You have keys and you are the main member," underlining the point with the statement: "I still have the keys."

Although the tour was ongoing at press time, Schon hints that Cain might not be in Journey for much longer. Which raises the question of what that could mean for bassist Valory, given the perceived lack of support.

"I want to take Neal Schon's JRNY on an exciting new trip musically," said a Schon Instagram post. "We will always have hits to play, but there must be musical growth. I also need to surround myself with people that care as I do."

Another said: "I've finally gotten to the point of 'enough'. I'm a patient person, so I've been told. Carlos Santana said: 'Wow – how and why do you [put up with it]?' It's out of love, but I am not receiving any back. They don't give a shit so now I don't either. Your skin becomes tough but it has to endure… bottom line I'll always be JRNY as it's been my baby from birth."

Schon declined to talk to *Classic Rock*, but an inside source told us: "Prior to Jon's marriage, he and Neal were close friends. This is an issue that Journey is attempting to resolve internally.

"But it's one attack after another," the source continues, "and until they remove at least one member from the band they're stuck in constant conflict."

Classic Rock approached Cain and his wife for comment, but at press time we had not received any response. **DL**

H.E.A.T: KEVIN NIXON; JOURNEY: REX

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TeamRock Radio is back!

Classic Rock, *Metal Hammer* and *Prog* mags' shows return.

TeamRock Radio is in business again, bringing back *The Classic Rock Magazine Show*, *The Metal Hammer Magazine Show* and *The Prog Magazine Show* – plus much more. TeamRock Radio ceased broadcasting last December, when its parent company – who also owned *Classic Rock*, *Metal Hammer* and *Prog* magazine – went into liquidation and those three magazines all ceased publication. But it was part of the portfolio of assets thankfully bought by our current owners, Future Publishing, just a few weeks later, and now the lights have been switched back on, and the faders pushed to 11, under the guidance of Programme Controller Philip Wilding.

"We've built the station for the people who'll actually listen to it. Rock stations in the UK and around the world are lazy and formulaic," says Editor In Chief Scott Rowley, promising music far beyond the obvious. "TeamRock Radio is for people who really love music."

The Classic Rock Magazine Show is presented by *CR* editor, Siân Llewellyn and goes out 5pm UK time on Fridays. *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing hosts the *The Prog Magazine Show* every Sunday at 5pm, while *Hammer* ed Merlin Alderslade gets heavy on *The Metal Hammer Magazine Show* on Saturdays at 5pm. **DL**

TEAMROCK RADIO

"I'm going to get a phone call!"

Ace and Gene bury the hatchet to write new songs.

Ace Frehley will "just let nature take its course" in response to renewed speculation that he is to rejoin Kiss. And yet the guitarist is quietly confident that such a move could happen, after collaborating again with former bandmate Gene Simmons.

Bassist Simmons has been fiercely critical of Ace's self-destructive behaviour, although with Frehley's alcohol and drugs issues long since overcome their friendship is now rekindled. "Within three hours we had written two songs together, which was a record for me and him," states Ace, who last year hooked up with Kiss singer/guitarist Paul Stanley for a cover of Free's *Fire And Water*.

"I can only be honest with you," Frehley told Eddie Trunk. "[A reunion] is something that I haven't pushed and it's something that Paul and Gene haven't brought up to me, [but] if the fans demand it, it'll probably get to a point where they're not gonna be able to say no. Should a promoter call up [Kiss manager] Doc McGhee and say: 'We'll give you two hundred million dollars for a six-month tour', I'm going to get a phone call." **DL**

NEWS

Roger Daltrey, **Pete Townshend** and **Brian May** have contributed to a charity single, a cover of Simon & Garfunkel's 1970 classic *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, to raise money for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire disaster. Townshend has also "written some cheques" for people affected by the blaze that killed around 80.

Iron Maiden's tour for *The Book Of Souls* will not be the band's last, according to Dave Murray. The guitarist says the band will "take some time off" after it ends on July 22, and that there will be "some surprises" in 2018.

The Temperance Movement are to break-in some new material with a club tour dubbed 'Small rooms, new tunes' in November. Check the band's website for venue details.

Black Sabbath have formally ceased touring, but Tony Iommi (pictured) still hankers for the band to play a show at Aston Villa FC's Villa Park stadium in Birmingham. "I haven't spoken to the others about it," he reveals, "[but I think] they'd be up for it."

A film of the band's 'farewell' show, *The End Of The End*, will be shown in selected cinemas for one night only, on September 28. To find out which venues and to buy tickets go to blacksabbathfilm tickets.com

BMG Records release *The Ten Year War*, a vinyl box set that collates Sabbath's eight Ozzy Osbourne-fronted albums, the following day.

WELCOME BACK

Rex Brown

With his first, "not metal" solo album, he hopes he can finally shake off the 'ex-Pantera bassist' tag.

"People will always expect me to play Pantera songs, and this is not that," says Rex Brown, talking to *Classic Rock* about his first-ever solo record. "You can't just do the same old shit all the time."

Smoke On This… definitely isn't 'the same old shit'. Instead, Brown – a former member of Down, Kill Devil Hill and, of course, Pantera – and co-writer Lance Harvill have put together an album heavy on 70s rock and packed with the grit of classic grunge.

You're thirty-five-plus years in, and here's your debut solo record. Why now?

I'm still goin'. I'm still writing songs, and I wanted to put out a rock'n'roll record. I got tired of painting the same picture, you know? I wanted to write a new storyline.

Your influences stretch to everything from swing to thrash. Did that have a bearing on the eclectic nature of the album?

That was a catalyst, for sure. It wasn't going back and interpreting what my heroes had done before, though. I was sitting on the back of the bus and I thought to myself that I really didn't like where I was sitting, and I needed to take some time off and enjoy life. There's much more to life than just making a fuckin' record. I'm just being honest. It boiled down to why I started doing this in the first place – it was the love of music. I had to go back and do something that made me happy. This is my solo record, and I feel comfortable in this driver's seat. I plan on doing this for a while.

Was the transition to solo artist a smooth one for you?

I enjoyed this record so much. It was like a new-found freedom. I wasn't up against a deadline, or what everybody paints you into a corner for what they think you should do. I felt like putting out a rock'n'roll record. That's the way I like it these days.

Some people might be a little surprised by some of the albums's more melodic moments.

If you took the name Rex Brown off it, took away my past and listened to the record on its own merit, then I think you might have something there [laughs].

I don't walk around thinking: "Oh, I'm making the definitive Rex Brown record." You're only as good as your last note, and I will keep on moving down the road. I can't just stop because my old band did.

> **"I had to go back and do something that made me happy."**

Is this record an opportunity for you to escape the tag: Rex Brown, ex-Pantera bassist?

Oh, people love to do that. They want to put you right there and say: "I'm sorry, you're not allowed to go anywhere." I just had some good tunes and wanted to track them. Now, here comes the whole circus behind it with people saying I have this record that I'm putting out and it's not metal. Who gives a shit? I remember when rock'n'roll was just rock'n'roll. I just think good music is good music.

I wanted to make a record you can listen to all the way through, and I made these songs intentionally short. If you look at *Come Together* by The Beatles, it's only three minutes long, it gets right to the fuckin' point and it leaves you wanting more. You need that these days, because attention spans are so short. Everyone has so much going on and they have to post everything on Facebook. I am not that dude. **RC**

Smoke On This is out on July 28 via Steamhammer/SPV.

HIGH HOPES

Shaman's Harvest

Soulful bluesy rockers who prefer to keep it real. They can also help you repair your car.

Nineteen years and six albums. You couldn't say Shaman's Harvest have rushed to reach the point they're at today. The Missouri-based band, who mix taut, muscular riffs, Stonesy blues licks and southern swagger into a satisfying whole, formed at high school in the late 90s and have taken a circuitous route that has included a decade releasing albums independently, multiple line-up changes and a health scare that almost completely upended the group.

That scare involved frontman Nathan Hunt, who was diagnosed with throat cancer back in 2013. "I've been in remission for three years now," he says. "It's one of those things where you're constantly thinking about it, so I try to live a little healthier these days. I used to live the life of a clichéd rock'n'roller – lots of drugs, alcohol, eating like shit on tour. Once I was well, I was like: 'Maybe I need to take this thing seriously.'"

That brush with mortality behind them, the band have upped their game with *Red Hands Black Deeds*, their sixth and most varied album to date. In common with many other bands, it sees them touch on current hot-topic issues such as immigration (*Broken Ones*) and the Syrian war (*The Devil In Our Wake*).

"We're not trying to preach about a particular way to live or anything," the singer points out, "but we're at a point where, especially with the current political climate we have in the States, it feels selfish to only talk about a shitty break-up or whatever."

The new album also marks the first time the band have eschewed all digital technology and recorded fully analogue.

"We've always been a soulful band; growing up we played a lot of juke joints. But in order for it to be genuine, it can't just be playing a blues lick, it's got to be in every aspect – the vocals, the percussion, the guitar tones… You've got to be able to leave some mistakes in there – it makes for a warmer, more soulful sound.

"It feels like there are a few of us doing this now," Hunt continues. "Jack White, of course; people like Rival Sons too. I feel people are appreciating a little bit more honesty in their records. It feels like the future – if that doesn't sound too crazy."

And it's this Midwestern honesty that perhaps has been the key to Shaman's Harvest's longevity.

"We're a very blue-collar band," says Hunt. "We all started as construction workers, so working twelve-hour days, six days a week has given us the work ethic it takes to last in this business.

"Maybe we haven't had giant-rocket success, but the slow wind has helped us. We don't hire people to sort our shit out. When stuff goes bad on the road, we know how to mechanically or electronically fix it. If the bus breaks down, we're the ones with the wrenches." **WS**

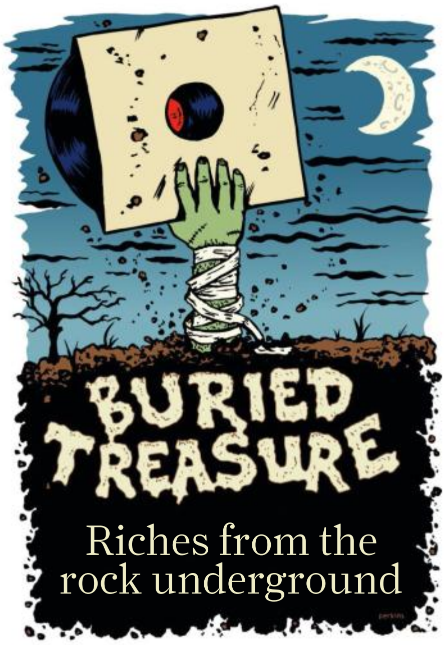
Red Hands Black Deeds is out on July 28 via Mascot.

FOR FANS OF...

"In our early days we'd listen to the Allman Brothers' *Live At Fillmore East* front to back," says Nathan Hunt. "We learned from those dudes how to sonically tell a story. Each song has a proper arc. Even if they were just sitting on a riff for two minutes straight, it still has an electrifying surge. That album has really served us the best as songwriters."

ADRIENNE BEACCO/PRESS

"I used to live the life of a clichéd rock'n'roller – drugs, alcohol..."



POWER OF ZEUS

The Gospel According To Zeus, 1970, Rare Earth Records, USA. £140

Rare Earth was a subsidiary of Motown, aimed at cashing in on the blossoming post-psychedelic underground hard-rock scene, and Detroit greasers Power Of Zeus were by far the heaviest band to be signed. But while the label's main act, also called Rare Earth, achieved notable success, Power Of Zeus were barely recognised at the time, and *The Gospel According To Zeus* became a common sight in bargain bins throughout the US after its release.

In the intervening years it has become something of a cult record, with the opening beats of heavy album closer *The Sorcerer Of Isis* being a popular break lifted by many respected hip-hop DJs. However, it's hard rock fans who have found a genuine affection for this guitar-driven beast of an album, comparable to the heavier aspects of Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Iron Butterfly and Bloodrock, with occasional nods to the soulful elements of Grand Funk.

'A guitar-driven beast that's comparable to Purple and Heep.'

Storming opener *It Couldn't Be Me* is the most immediate track, although other rockers of note include *No Time*, *Realization* and *In The Night*. Meanwhile, doom fans will appreciate the epic dirge of *The Death Trip*. Although Power Of Zeus were a Christian rock band, that's only really evident after close scrutiny of their lyrics.

Despite the sublime production and musicianship, each track becomes somewhat indistinguishable from the next. However, this is still a great album, and a must for aficionados. **LD**

NEWS

Police evacuated last month's **Rock Am Ring Festival** in Germany due to an apparent terror threat. Confusion reigned when the names of two Syrian nationals working at the event were misspelled on a list provided by the promoter. It led to the cancellation of a number of performances, including festival co-headliners Rammstein.

Fast-rising British blues-rock combo **King King** release their fourth studio album, *Exile & Grace*, on October 6. A single, *(She Don't) Give Me No Lovin'*, is available now.

A bumper crop of current and former members of **Fairport Convention**, including Richard Thompson, Ashley Hutchings and Judy Dyble, will celebrate the group's 50th anniversary at this year's annual Cropredy Convention in Oxfordshire on August 10-12 (sold out). "Our Saturday night set will undoubtedly present the most Fairport members ever performing in the same show," says bassist Dave Pegg.

Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons, the band formed by former Motörhead guitarist Campbell (pictured) have signed to Nuclear Blast Records. Their line-up includes Campbell's sons Todd on guitar, Tyla on bass and Dane on drums, plus vocalist Neil Starr. "Once we get back from the summer festivals we look forward to recording our first full-length album," says Phil.

WELCOME BACK

Amplifier

Sel Balamir's experimental band return with a *Faust*-inspired album – and a desire to have a hell of a good time.

Led by their charismatic and colourful singer/guitarist Sel Balamir, Amplifier have been a fascinating experimental presence on the UK rock scene for two decades now. After acclaimed albums including *The Octopus*, *Echo Street* and 2014's *Mystoria*, they're back with more hefty literate psych anthems on their sixth album, *Trippin' With Doctor Faustus*. Balamir tells us about this rock'n'roll fable – recorded on two-inch tape for his own label Rockosmos – and posting merch to the far ends of the earth.

Why did you record the new album to tape?
One of our old buddies, Steve Lloyd, died from cancer. He used to co-own [key Manchester venue] The Roadhouse, and he left us an old tape machine, this Otari MTR-90. It didn't work, so we fixed it up and decided to record on it. I'll never go back to using a computer – it's not rock'n'roll, it's just file management.

Was Goethe an inspiration for your Faustian tale?
What, the Chas & Dave tune?

Goethe, not *Gertcha*!
[Laughs] Just kidding. No. I've never read Goethe's *Faust*. Only the song *Silvio* is really about the Faustian pact. The others are more observations. Opener *Rainbow Machine* is really upbeat, positive and idealistic, and over the course of the record you end up with *Old Blue Eyes* and it's like you're going to hell. There comes a point where youthful idealism becomes tempered by a few too many experiences.

Sounds heavy. But there's a Gong-like humour and warmth to Amplifier.
Definitely. And that's really important to us. When we first started, in the nineties, we wanted to be taken seriously, to be acknowledged for making art. As you get older, you realise that music's about celebrating being alive, about having fun. I hope that's what comes through.

"As you get older, you realise that music's about having fun."

It seems like the scene has changed around you, rather than vice versa.
We're kind of beyond space and time. All our albums sound different, but we play the same kind of music with the same spirit, and that hasn't changed. That's what art should be. Each album is about the band's circumstances at the time.

You sound really energised by your label, Rockosmos.
It's really inspiring working with other people. We've released records by great new bands Thumpermonkey and Awooga. Amplifier's got a mailing list of fifteen thousand people, and we know the process inside out. We can help.

Twenty years in, are you happy with Amplifier's cult status?
I don't think about it. We just play the music we're drawn to, music with that feeling of unconstrained freedom. It took a long time to build up that mailing list. I send all our merch out myself, I know where it all goes – everywhere from Malaysia to the Falkland Islands,…

'Amplifier – loved from Kuala Lumpur to Port Stanley.'
[Laughs] But that's what's great about rock fans. If you're into rock music, at the end of your life you'll have a record collection. It's a statement of your personality. Looking through someone's vinyl will tell me a lot about that person in a short time. **GM**

Trippin' With Doctor Faustus is available now via Rockosmos.

RAW POWER

Dime Marches On

The ultimate commemoration of a true guitar legend.

One of the many things that attracted rock fans to the wonder of Pantera was the playing of their guitarist, Darrell 'Dimebag' Abbott. Mixing that unmistakably laid-back Texan attitude with a style that, while technical in the extreme, dovetailed into the brutal music perfectly, he was well on his way to becoming one of the ultimate rock guitar heroes before he was murdered, shot and killed while on stage with his post-Pantera band Damageplan on December 8, 2004.

Dimebag's main guitar throughout his career was an instrument he won at a Dallas guitar competition in 1982, a Dean ML that he subsequently dubbed the 'Dean From Hell'. Dean are honouring both the man and that unique guitar with the very limited-edition – just 100 worldwide – USA Dimebag Commemorative ML, using Dimebag's original as a reference to come up with something truly special.

When Dime won the guitar it was maroon in colour, but his long-time friend Buddy Blaze repainted it blue and applied an airbrushed lightning bolt. That iconic finish is recreated by hand on each Commemorative ML, and the spec, which includes Bill Lawrence and DiMarzio pickups, a top-mounted Floyd Rose Original and DBD traction control knobs, is followed to the letter.

The mahogany neck features the classic V-profile that set Dean guitars apart back in the day, while a perfectly finished mahogany body gives the tone a depth that works beautifully with the high-output pickups. Although this guitar sounds monstrous with a high-gain rock tone, it can effortlessly deliver more restrained styles too, including jazz. And, take it from us, it's a dream to play.

The quality of the craftsmanship is impressive to say the least and, at £5,824, this is an American icon, just like the man being commemorated. Play one if you can.

More information at www.deanguitars.com.

Simon Bradley

REX

AN XL-SIZE SOUND

Pickups were an integral component of Dimebag Darrell's iconic tone.

American Deans usually featured a pair of either zebra or double-creme DiMarzio Super Distortion humbucker pickups, but Dime (pictured) retrofitted his ML with a Bill Lawrence L-500XL in the bridge position. The latter may not be as familiar a name as some others, but that pickup has graced many a rock record, one being Extreme's 1990 album *Pornograffiti*, via guitarist Nuno Bettencourt's Washburn N4.

The unit in the Dean From Hell guitar was made by BL's Jzchak Wajcman. With a DC resistance of 11.2k, it's a high-output pickup that features two thin magnetic rails set in black resin, rather than the more traditional rows of separate pole pieces. When used for rock, it really helps to accentuate the guitar's harmonics, as is evident from Dime's aggressive tone. The L-500XL, as well as other Bill Lawrence pickups, is still available today.

Sharp Dressed Man

Rock 'n' Roll accessories

This month, @jamiehibbard is elegantly wasted in these three sartorial stand-outs.

The Kooples short-sleeved Palm Skulls print shirt
This French label caters for anyone who has a rock'n'roll-tinged sensibility to their wardrobe, and this shirt walks the infinitely tricky line of dress-down Friday in the office followed by going to a pub/gig straight from work. It's got a very on-trend Hawaiian-feeling print, but closer inspection reveals the true Palm Skulls nature. Great stuff.
£98 @The_Kooples
thekooples.co.uk

Zadig & Voltaire Kheo Penninghen sweater
Sticking with the French theme, Zadig & Voltaire come at rock'n'roll style from further up the cult-favourite ladder, with beautiful garments with a grungy style made from high-quality materials.
£310 @ZadigEtVoltaire
zadig-et-voltaire.com

Converse x fragment design Chuck Taylor All Star II
It doesn't matter how you cut it, Converse are undeniably cool. But what you really want is a limited-edition pair so you shrink the chances of bumping into someone else wearing the same ones.
£80 @Converse
converse.com

NEWS

Guns N' Roses were joined on stage by **Angus Young** during a recent gig in Hannover, Germany. The AC/DC guitarist, a good friend of Axl Rose after the latter stood in for Brian Johnson last year, played on the 'DC standards *Whole Lotta Rosie* and *Riff Raff*.

Saxon's 22nd studio album is to be titled *Thunderbolt*. Produced by Andy Sneap, it's due out in January 2018 and will be backed by a huge tour. The album is set to include a tribute to Lemmy called *They Played Rock And Roll*.

Nikki Sixx says he has "unofficially retired, or maybe just expired" from touring. The Mötley Crüe bassist has "no immediate plans" to go on the road again "unless I get a wild hair up my ass or something or somebody really inspirational comes along."

Mr. Big (pictured) have announced six UK dates at Nottingham Rock City November 16, Newcastle Northumbria University 17, London Shepherd's Bush Empire 19, Manchester Academy 21, Glasgow ABC 22, Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall 23. Support comes from **The Answer** and **Faster Pussycat**.

Wolfsbane play Christmas dates at Winchester The Railway December 15, Edinburgh Bannerman's 16, Birmingham Asylum 17, London Islington Academy 21, Pontypool Dragonfly 22, Bolton Bar Metro Rocks 23.

WELCOME BACK

Peter Perrett

The former Only Ones frontman returns with his first record in 16 years, knowing he's lucky to still be alive.

Before his just-released new solo album, Peter Perrett's last one came out in 1996. That's a full 16 years after his final album with the Only Ones, the seditionaries who blazed a brief, brilliant trail across the post-punk skyscape, best known for their era-soundtracking 1978 single *Another Girl, Another Planet*.

Decades of drug addition served to numb his creative spirit, but the now clean-living Perrett has finally returned with *How The West Was Won*. Reassuringly, it shows that his songwriting chops are intact, along with his dry wit, sharp lyricism and sneery drawl.

How come you finally made a solo album?
I did four gigs in the summer of 2015. The physical aspect of rehearsing for those shows meant that I was playing guitar again and my mind was back in a place where it was capable of being creative. So I wrote a couple of new songs and it just sort of enthused me. The momentum started rolling from there.

Once you were up and running, did the songs start flowing again?
Absolutely. My output over the decades has been minimal, to say the least. So when I *do* do something, I want to do it to the best of my ability. Now I've got less distractions than I had earlier in life. Music is the only thing that really fills me with that driving passion. I'm fortunate to have it as an escape. It's more benign and less dangerous to your health than other escapes. It's something that can extend your life rather than shorten it.

You're touring later this year, too.
In the seventies, and even when I was active for a couple of years in the nineties, playing live felt like an exorcism – all your inhibitions could be released on stage and it was very liberating. Nowadays I have to be much more reserved and concentrate on saving my breath and energy for singing.

> **"Music is less dangerous to your health than other escapes."**

The Only Ones reunited for some live shows back in 2007. Was that a conflicted time for you?
It was enjoyable because the fans were amazing and they made it almost like a religious experience. The only drawback was that my voice wasn't great, because I hadn't got myself physically healthy enough to do it justice. I'm very self-critical, and I wasn't at the top of my game. If I'd had any capabilities of being able to exercise logic in the decision to re-form for those gigs, I would've said no to it, but I didn't want to disappoint the people who'd been my brothers thirty years before. So it was a hard position to be in. I was using a steroid inhaler for my lung problems and, like most things, I used it to excess.

Are drugs definitely a thing of the past for you now?
Yeah, in every way. I knew that if I wanted to survive at all I had to change my lifestyle. After I gave up hard drugs I carried on smoking skunk, then took methadone for a while. But I gave up smoking anything six years ago because my lungs were suffering the most.

At the very last moment, you think about survival and any last will and testament. That's the only reason why any urgency has taken over my psyche and I've been working hard to get things back together. I know there's a limit to my time, that I'd better do things properly while I can. Thankfully I'm still here. **RH**

How The West Was Won is out now via Domino Recording Co.

PETER PERRETT: STEVE GULLICK

★ HIGH HOPES

Koyo

Nu proggers with an eye on Led Zep, it was hearing Bowie cry that showed them the way.

While studying Music Production at Leeds University, Koyo's Jacob Price got a master class with veteran engineer/Bowie producer Ken Scott, who let him in on a little rock'n'roll history. "Ken played us the stems of *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy Stardust*," says the keyboardist/programmer. "By the end of *Five Years,* Bowie is just crying. It's a proper performance that feels like a one-off take. And it's that kind of thinking we've tried to bring to our band."

Some big names are being hurled around in the effort to describe Koyo's dramatic, widescreen sound, biggest among them being Pink Floyd. "Maybe people hear Floyd because we're on the more textural side of progressive music," offers vocalist/guitarist Huw Edwards. "That whole Dream Theater, shredding thing isn't what we're about. We like bands that give you the impression they could really take off if they wanted to, but are holding a little back. For us it's really all about the song."

The 'progressive' tag isn't the albatross necklace it once was, and the band embrace Opeth, Mogwai and Tame Impala as influences. There's something fresh and almost hip about the layered swathes of guitar and electronica on Koyo's forthcoming self-titled debut album. It's a rich, psychedelic and highly melodic blend of post- and noise-rock, given panoramic scale by their nu-prog leanings. Towering first single *Tetrachromat (Parts 1 & 2)* gives credence to the Floyd argument, but then comes the oddly funky follow-up *Lost In The Kingdom*, inspired by Paul Simon's *Graceland*. King Crimson and the Mars Volta collide on *Ray Of Sunshine*, *Now I Understand* points to Mogwai and even Sonic Youth, and Koyo's synth-spangled swirl of guitars often evokes My Bloody Valentine in their *Loveless* pomp.

Born in the 90s, lifelong friends Price and Edwards grew up in Kettering, and absorbed their dads' record collections – Floyd, Sabbath, Hendrix, Zeppelin. The first gig Price saw was Rush in 2004 (he was just nine); Alice In Chains' melodic approach in particular rubbed off on Edwards, who studied Music Performance in Leeds. Formed there in 2015, Koyo (it's the Japanese word for the changing colour of leaves in autumn) grew from an acoustic album the two started that spiralled into a fully fledged band project. They added bassist Dan Comlay and drummer Tom Higham, whose jazz background adds another stylistic element to their intoxicating mix.

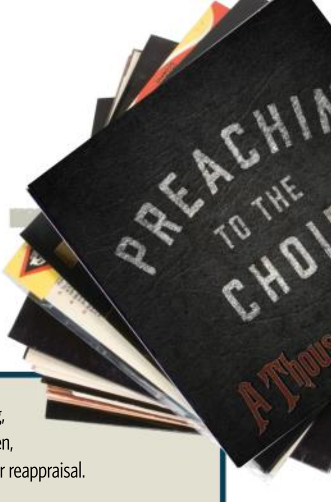
Koyo have played only a handful of gigs to date, and the recent addition of second guitarist Seb Knee-Wright has added tantalising heft to their live sound. "Seb's really into grindcore," says Price. "He's really brought that dynamic in, so now we're grittier and more powerful, caked in distortion. It'll be interesting to see where we go next." It really will. **GM**

Koyo is released on August 4 via 88 Watt.

FOR FANS OF...

"People have said they hear Pink Floyd in us," singer/guitarist Huw Edwards says of Koyo. "We're huge Radiohead fans, along with Mogwai, Opeth, My Bloody Valentine. But you know that beautiful chord progression on Led Zeppelin's *Down By The Seaside*, from *Physical Graffiti*? That's the sort of thing we're really aiming for."

"Maybe people hear Floyd because we're on the more textural side of progressive music."



Heavy Rotation

What we've been listening to this month

1 You And All Of Your Friends
Alice Cooper

The much anticipated reunion of Alice Cooper (Dennis Dunaway, Neal Smith, Michael Bruce) with their original vocalist – the shy, retiring Vince Furnier – resulted in two new songs. Their first studio material since their '74 split captures the quartet in swaggering form. Perhaps an entire album next time?

2 The Land Of Plenty
Robin Trower

The lead-off track from Trower's impressive new album *Time And Emotion*, this mid-paced funky blues finds the veteran guitar hero on typically stylish and unhurried form, with his lived-in vocal having something of a Billy Gibbons flavour to it. Classy stuff.

3 Highway Tune
Greta Van Fleet

"Their influences are varied", their publicist says of these classic rock youths from Michigan. Translation: 'Their influences are Led Zeppelin, Led Zeppelin and Led Zeppelin. And a bit of Wolfmother. Who also sound like Led Zeppelin.' Still, they could pick far worse to take inspiration from, and *Highway Tune* is totally excellent, so we're not complaining.

4 Weak And Weepin'
Tyler Bryant And The Shakedown

He's a young bluesy guitar virtuoso who's probably never had to shave yet, but don't be under any illusion – Tyler Bryant is a total rock star, as we saw when he played his solo Camden show t'other week. No wonder he got the Guns N' Roses support slot.

5 Nowhere Now
Steven Wilson

On our second/third/fourth listens of the king of modern prog's new oeuvre, this was the track that really stood out. A soaring, ELO-esque hybrid of whimsical joy and pensive depth, it's quietly rather life affirming. Listen out for the lead guitar part midway through. It's short but oh-so-spine-tingling.

6 One By One
Cock Sparrer

Their first studio album in a decade finds the pioneering East End street punk survivors on rare form, and its opener exemplifies why their reputation within their genre remains unassailable. *One By One* is a bruising sonic assault tempered by pop sensibility and lyrics that match nail-hard braggadocio with tears-in-beers terrace nostalgia.

7 Train Song
Rex Brown

Who knew? Pantera's former bassist – and one of the Texan groove-metallers' less notorious members – can really sing, and write a damn good riffy rock song. At least that's what *Train Song*, taken from his upcoming solo debut, suggests.

8 Peace Blossom Boogy
The Babe Rainbow

Australian bong warriors The Babe Rainbow follow last year's *Enchanted Broccoli Forest* single with a self-titled debut album that will encourage listeners to abandon their day jobs to go and live on communes and take up polygamy. *Peace Blossom Boogy* is like Canned Heat at their most stoned, versus The Beatles. At their most stoned.

9 The Light Pours Out Of Me
Magazine

The release of the astonishing seven-CD treasure trove that is *Manchester: North Of England 1977-1993* offers ample excuse to rediscover one of the city's greatest bands. Nestled somewhere between punk and prog, Magazine – still sounding as dazzling, futuristic, alien, dynamic and crisp as ever – remain eternally ripe for reappraisal. Investigate.

Jim Morrison: it's half a century since The Doors hit No.1.

10 Wall Of Glass
Liam Gallagher

With the younger Gallagher turning out for One Love Manchester, singing *Don't Look Back In Anger* to Glasto and sending conciliatory 50th greetings to 'rkid', Liam is starting to look like 'the reasonable one'. Meanwhile, this Oasis-level lead single from *As You Were* could unequivocally establish him as 'the successful one'.

11 Unfuck The World
Prophets Of Rage

Raging harder than ever at an increasingly unreliable machine, Commerford, Morello and Wilk's awe-inspiring collaboration with Cypress Hill's B-Real, Public Enemy's Chuck D and DJ Lord is as angry as you'd expect post-Trump.

12 Meet On The Ledge
Fairport Convention

Not just one of the Fairports' best tracks, but also one of the best of the whole folk-rock genre. Elegant, beautifully melodic and strangely powerful, it features the exquisite voice of the late Sandy Denny. Play it loud and be transported to another time and place. From the new seven-disc *Come All Ye: The First Ten Years.*

13 Bye Bye Johnny
Rolling Stones

Exquisite brutality; transcendent thuggery: 1972's *Exile* tour Stones (Jagger, Richards, Watts, Wyman, Nicky Hopkins and an impeccably in-form Mick Taylor) captured in Fort Worth, Texas for the *Ladies And Gentleman* concert film. Nothing offers a better definition of rock'n'roll than this Stones incarnation doing Chuck Berry.

14 Westermarck
Charly Bliss

Indie-pop with a definite crunch; think Juliana Hatfield fronting the Pixies. Singer Eva Hendricks is pure Marmite – you'll either think she's cuter than a barrel of kittens afloat on a sea of candyfloss, or you'll run screaming – but either way *Westermarck* is as bouncy as Tigger on a trampoline.

15 Burn Like Willie
A Thousand Horses

Nashville-based ensemble return with more countrified gusto on new record *Bridges*, featuring this rather tasty upbeat number that's more southern than cornbread deep-fried in whiskey. We're not entirely sure what the title actually means, but we do like the track. Stetsons and cowboy boots compulsory.

16 (She Don't) Gimme No Lovin'
King King

Alan Nimmo and his band of bluesy merry men are back, and they've gone *very* 70s. In a good way. This upbeat first taste of the band's forthcoming album *Exile And Grace* is a joyful, rich-sounding knees-up, with tasty notes of Bad Company and Thunder in the mix. Read more about it in our Autumn Preview (p34-43).

17 Light My Fire
The Doors

And now for a little Summer Of Love nostalgia. This month it's 50 years since The Doors went to No.1 with *Light My Fire*. To celebrate, they're releasing a limited-edition replica of the 7" single released in Japan in '67. It's the song that made stars of Morrison and co, and listening to it again now it's not hard to see why. A stone-cold classic.

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GETTY

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LIVE AT THE ROUNDHOUSE
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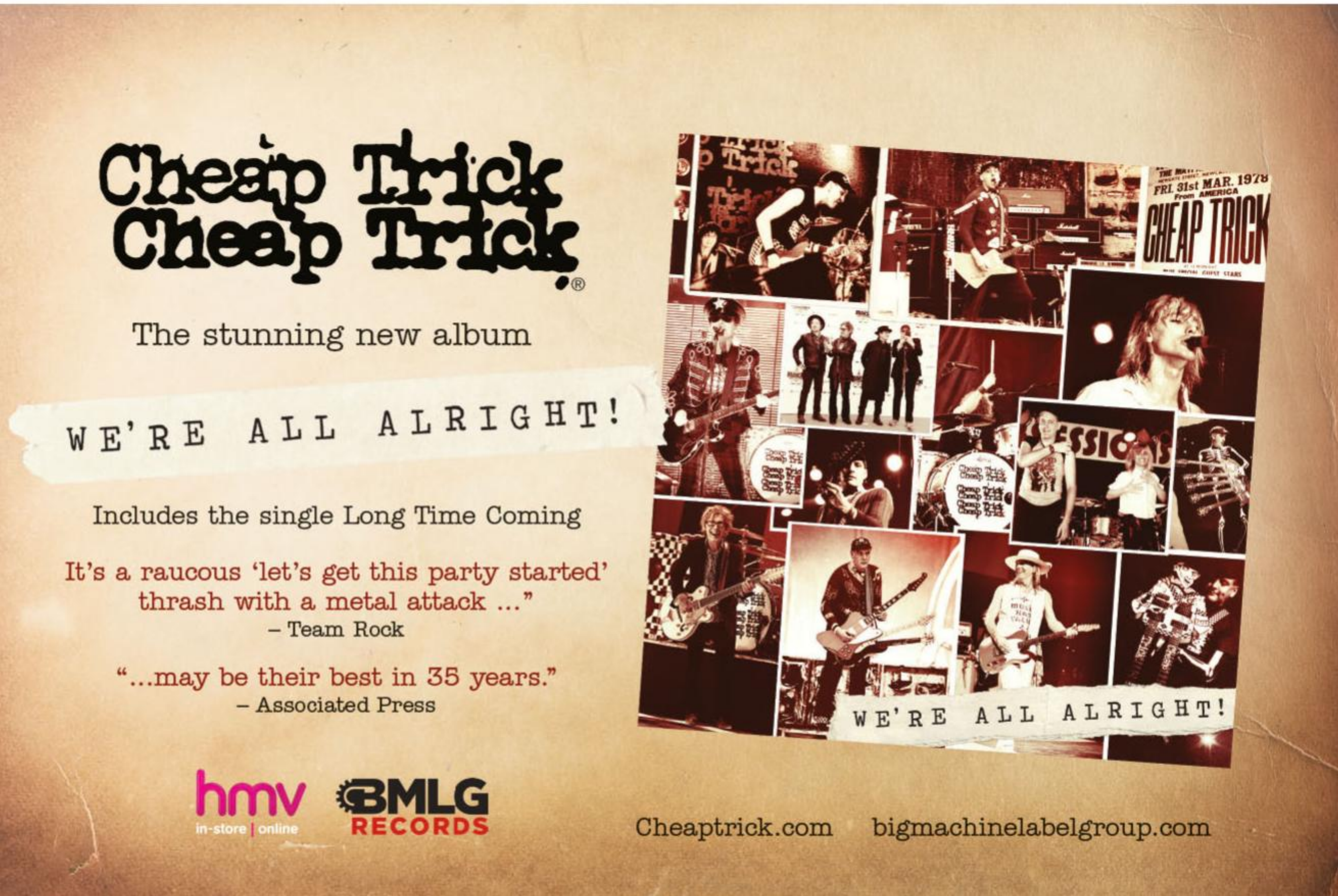
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"...may be their best in 35 years."
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Genesis

Follow You Follow Me

Their first single since becoming a three-piece, a savvy change of tack from complex prog epics to a concise four-minute 'pop' song, it was a Top 10 hit and opened the door to megastardom.

Words: **Paul Lester**

By the start of 1978, the 'classic' line-up of Genesis had lost two members – Peter Gabriel left in 1975 after *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, Steve Hackett quit after 1977's *Wind & Wuthering* – but they could take some comfort in the knowledge that the band now had a wider fan base. And that was largely due to one song: the pop-savvy *Follow You Follow Me*, with its simple betrothal of love and sing-song chorus.

There had been songs with a more accessible flavour on previous Genesis albums, such as *Ripples* from 1976's *A Trick Of The Tail*, and *Your Own Special Way* from *Wind & Wuthering*. But for follow-up *And Then There Were Three*, and specifically the one that became its first single, Phil Collins, Tony Banks and Mike Rutherford set out with the express intention to write something that would attract a broader range of fans, specifically more females. They wanted to help shift the perception that Genesis only made long, complex, instrumentally elaborate rock for hirsute proggers allergic to melodic succinctness.

"Until *Follow You Follow Me* our audience was very strongly male," Mike Rutherford shrugs. "After it, all the guys were able to say to their girlfriends: 'Here's that song you like.' So they'd come along [to gigs], and of course they'd enjoy the whole evening. It changed our audience ratio and we got more women after that."

Follow You Follow Me wasn't originally intended as a single. In fact, it might easily have wound up as another of Genesis's multipartite song suites.

"Initially," Rutherford explains, "it was just a riff I had. Tony then put some chords behind it, and a couple of really unusual changes. In those days we'd just work on bits and put them all together… It could have been part of a long song.

"We were never really good at writing short songs," he says, despite having grown up "with The Beatles, The Kinks and The Small Faces as inspiration".

"We were an albums band. And it's quite an art to write a song that works in three and a half or four minutes. But this one had a natural life as a short song. It was a simple idea, musically."

The unusual guitar sound at the start was done with an MXR flanger effects pedal. "Trevor Horn once said the intro is the most important part of the song," Rutherford says. "I know what he means."

Once that guitar figure was in place, Rutherford knocked out the lyrics in 10 minutes flat.

"Not quite ten minutes," he says, bristling slightly. "It was the first time I'd written such simple words. They were inspired by my wife [Angie]. We were away a lot on tour, and I wasn't seeing her an awful lot, as happens with bands in the early days. So I thought of her. It was such a simple sentiment, unlike, you know, all our other words at the time. And so you write it from the heart, quickly.

"I thought, 'God, this can't be any good,'" he adds, laughing. "Normally lyrics take agonising over and developing. But then you look at [*FYFM*] and realise that's the charm."

And yet, for all its engaging qualities, the song was far from sappy. "It's one of those songs you hear now on the radio and for some reason it's not sugary," Rutherford offers. "It could so easily have been a little bit soppy. It's the way Phil sang it; the combination of everything. It sounds convincing."

Follow You Follow Me was recorded at Relight Studios in the Netherlands. "What we used to do was go away for three or four weeks, just the band, and immerse ourselves in the recording process," Rutherford recalls. "When you go away somewhere you definitely get in the zone."

Recording for their first album without Steve Hackett since 1971's *Nursery Cryme*, did they miss their former guitarist in the studio?

"Well, I wasn't a lead guitarist, and I remember discussing getting in another guitarist, what with Steve's fluidity and style, but I think we felt at that stage that we'd been together quite a long time as the three of us, and to bring a new person in, to make them understand the way we worked, to make them fit, was quite a big ask. So we thought we'd just try without it and see."

Their first UK Top 10 hit, *Follow You Follow Me* also marked their entry into the US charts.

"Out of the blue we had our first hit single. In America we were a popular live band with a cult following, but we struggled at radio. Then suddenly this song came out and people liked it and bought the album. It was nice to have a little bit more recognition from people who didn't like us before. People were drawn in by it."

It was the first real sign of Genesis's pop sensibility, one that would help them become, over the next decade or so, one of the biggest bands on the planet. But its very commercial potency proved irksome for some diehard fans.

"I know it sounds awful to say, but I never really worry about the fans," Rutherford says. "That's the worst thing you can do, because then you start trying to work out your direction to satisfy them. I think it's really important that you try and satisfy yourself, wherever it takes you. That way your inspiration is never controlled by what you think you should be doing. In the long term, for any fan who likes music, it produces better results."

Better, and more varied. It's extraordinary that one band could accommodate everything from *Supper's Ready* to… well, *Follow You Follow Me*.

"Yes," he says, as though he's just been made aware of Genesis's eclecticism for the first time. "I rather like that."

Mike + The Mechanics' album Let Me Fly is available now via BMG.

"Until *Follow You Follow Me* our audience was very strongly male. It changed our audience ratio and we got more women after that."

PROG VS PUNK

While Genesis were recording *Follow You Follow Me* in Holland in late 1977, back at home, punk was raging. But no amount of anarchy in the UK managed to derail the prog generation. Yes were enjoying a No.1 album with *Going For The One*, Pink Floyd reached No.2 with *Animals* and ELP had a No.2 hit single with *Fanfare For The Common Man*.

Art-rock also flourished, with 10cc's *Deceptive Bends*, ELO's *Out Of The Blue* and Supertramp's *Even In The Quietest Moments* enjoying major chart success. Elsewhere, Hawkwind had one of their biggest albums with *Quark, Strangeness And Charm*, and Peter Gabriel's self-titled solo debut made it into the Top 10.

If anything, in its brevity and melodic concision, *Follow You Follow Me* was the neatest possible response to punk.

GETTY

And then there were three: (l-r) Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks and Phil Collins.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
February 1978

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.7
US No.23

PERSONNEL
Phil Collins
Vocals, drums, percussion
Tony Banks
Keyboards
Mike Rutherford
Guitar, bass guitar

WRITTEN BY
Tony Banks, Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford

PRODUCER
David Hentschel and Genesis

LABEL
Charisma/Virgin

Q&A

Fish

As Misplaced Childhood gets a deluxe edition, Marillion's former frontman looks back on the band's commercial peak.

Words: **Fraser Lewry** Portrait: **Stuart Wood**

It's easy to forget just how quickly things happened for Marillion. Two years after Fish auditioned for the band in Aylesbury in 1981, they were second on the bill to Black Sabbath at Reading. By 1985 the singer was charming the nation's housewives as *Kayleigh* was introduced on *Wogan*. And by the following summer it was all beginning to fall apart. Sixty thousand fans congregated at the Milton Keynes Bowl for The Garden Party to hear *Misplaced Childhood* – the album that gave *Kayleigh* to the world – in its entirety. But Marillion never played it again, and Fish would be gone within two years. More than three decades later, the album has returned as a deluxe box set.

Why is *Misplaced Childhood* the first Marillion album to get repackaged in this way?
Not my decision. Parlophone are in charge of all this. They decide what's going out and what's not going out. We can put our hands up in the air and say: "Can we suggest stuff?" and they'll listen to us, but at the end of the day it's all their decisions. I'm glad it's been sorted out, but I wish it had been done two years ago. It would have made more sense to release it for the anniversary.

What has your involvement in it been?
Supplying bits and pieces of information, doing interviews for the sleeve notes, providing sleeve notes, working on the documentary Blu-ray. This was great fun to make, getting together with [producer] Chris Kimsey and setting all the old multitrack master tapes up track by track. And I had a great time going out to Hansa Studios [in Berlin] with Steve Rothery and Chris, doing a documentary for Sky Arts. Being back in that environment was like taking a walk back into wonderland. It was a bit like *The Matrix*, because when we were there, you'd walk out the front door and there was a wasteland. Across to the right was The Wall heading off to the distance. Now it's a branch of KPMG.

Listening back to those multitracks, was there anything that surprised you?
What really stuck out was what we managed to do it in such a short time, and the fact it was played live. All the backing tracks and all the big skeletons were all put down in big blocks. It wasn't surgically assembled using Pro Tools, it was all tape. It was amazing to hear the performances, and how honest and passionate they were.

Do you ever play the album now?
I don't tend to play my own albums. The only time is when we're in tour rehearsal or putting a set-list together. When we did the Return To Childhood tour we had to listen to it in detail. I loved playing it live. It was incredible to go out and sing it. After a couple of shows we settled into it and completely relaxed. You'd hit the opening chord, and the next thing you'd be finishing *White Feather*, unaware of forty-five minutes passing. It took me back and reignited those times, and quite a few times I found myself crying on stage thinking about the lyrics, be it *Mylo* or be it *Kayleigh*. And that's a strange thing: you're thinking about someone who died a few years ago.

You met Kay Lee (the subject of *Kayleigh*) again in 2005 and gave her a copy of the album. Was that important for you?
It was just one of those things, old friends getting in contact again. She came to a show, then she came round for lunch and to meet my daughter, and I asked if she'd ever heard the album. She said she hadn't, so I gave her a copy. She called me up and said she'd cried nearly most of the way home, that she'd never realised what I'd written. And that was one of the most touching things I ever heard. I was really glad she heard the album, but it was a personal thing more than anything else.

Have you met many real-life Kayleighs?
Hundreds. And they're a constant reminder of how old I'm getting. Originally it was about babies called Kayleigh, then it was little girls called Kayleigh, then it was teenagers called Kayleigh, and now you're in a bar and someone will come up and say: "Hello, my name's Kayleigh!" It was *my* name, and think about it: the oldest Kayleigh could not have been born before 1985. It's one of my big calls to fame.

Do you think you'd have remained in the band longer if *Kayleigh* hadn't been such a huge hit?
I think that if *Kayleigh* hadn't been a big hit, I'm not sure the band would be have stayed together, because there's a high probability that EMI would have dropped us. There were whispers going round. And our attitude was: "Well, if this is going to be the last album, fuck it, let's go out and do what we always wanted to do: a concept album."

What do you think of the 1986 Garden Party concert, looking back on it now?
That was a daunting gig. By that point we were all getting a bit fried – the magic in some instances was wearing a little bit thin. But it was a big exclamation mark for us. A lot of people probably have better memories of it than I have, and there was tremendous celebration in the fan base because it was Milton Keynes: it was The Big Place. But I was more into concentrating on what I was doing – and making sure I was doing it right – than actually enjoying it.

Do you have a favourite memory from that time?
When we started playing those big gigs in the autumn to winter of 1985 it was really exciting. Everything was new: the hotels were better, the buses were bigger. But it was a yin and yang thing for me, because it was the album that made the band and broke the band at the same time.

Do you miss those days?
No.

The deluxe edition of Misplaced Childhood is out on July 21 via Parlophone and is reviewed this issue. For more on Fish's current exploits, visit http://fishheads.club/

Fish: enjoyed his Marillion days but doesn't miss them.

> **"If *Kayleigh* hadn't been a hit, it's likely that EMI would have dropped us."**

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT…

Kenny Wayne Shepherd

It's a "fantastic time" to have the blues. So says the musician who helped bring the genre into the present.

Words: **Polly Glass** Portrait: **Kevin Nixon**

Back in the early to mid-90s, blues wasn't a young man's game. Then in 1995 a teenage guitarist from Shreveport, Louisiana named Kenny Wayne Shepherd released his debut album, *Ledbetter Heights*, and a serious shift in perception began. Musicians including Jonny Lang, Philip Sayce and Joe Bonamassa emerged, putting blues guitar on the radar of rock fans and younger listeners.

"People were paying attention, on a mainstream level," Shepherd explains over coffee after our shoot in Shoreditch's Blues Kitchen. "It was getting played on the radio, concerts of young blues players were selling out… there was suddenly a wave of interest in young people doing blues music."

Now 39, Shepherd is returning to the UK after just a few (but popular) visits over the past decade.

He's all about the blues, but does a lot with it.
"The ability to take blues in so many different directions is a testament to its significance in music," Shepherd reasons, "because if you trace all popular music back to its origin, you'll wind up with the blues. So you can take a bit from all these genres to allow you to take the blues into different directions."

And so they did. Following 2014's "traditional blues" record *Goin' Home*, new album *Lay It On Down* offers a fresher look at the genre, stirring in elements of rock, country and R&B.

You can blame it all on Stevie Ray Vaughan.
Thanks to Shepherd's dad being a local radio personality, Kenny grew up going to gigs and meeting celebrities backstage. When he was seven he met Stevie Ray Vaughan at one of them. "I was so entranced that the whole world could have exploded and I wouldn't have been aware," he remembers. "From then on I wanted to learn to play guitar with that kind of passion and intensity."

He's married to Mel Gibson's daughter Hannah, so his ties to mainstream celebrity remain strong.

Success (and excess) came quickly…
Shepherd was 13 when he signed his first record deal. His debut sold more than a million copies and his mainstream presence grew. Through his teens and early twenties he opened for an impressive roster of A-listers including Van Halen, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and the Eagles.

"I was just like: 'I can't believe I'm getting to do this. Every time I go somewhere to play music, people are showing up! And they're liking it!'" he recalls. "I was absolutely thrilled."

…but he took control of his life.
At the age of 25, having seen friends suffer through rock'n'roll excess, Shepherd quit drinking. He hasn't touched alcohol since.

"I just wanted to focus on the things that were important and try and fulfil my commitment to my family, my career, and not have anything stand in the way."

God and family are important.
Not long after his decision to be sober, Shepherd converted to Catholicism – building on Christian, churchgoing roots in the religious south. After years of living in California, he's brought his wife and their five children back to Louisiana.

"I just feel like my kids can walk out the back door – we live by a lake – and they can go out and fish, and we have a horse farm that we own, so they can go out and take care of the horses, and we have donkeys and things… California's great, but the culture here's different."

Now is a great time for the blues.
"This is a fantastic time, I think, to be a musician in this genre," he says. "If you look over the history of blues music, and most music that's been around for a long time – with the exception of pop music, because it's popular for a specific amount of time before they move onto the next thing – it's cyclical and it always has these surges in popularity. And I think we're experiencing that right now. So I'm glad to be a part of it."

Lay It On Down is released on July 21 via Provogue/Mascot Label Group. The Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band play Ramblin' Man Fair in Maidstone on Saturday, July 29.

Special thanks to the Blues Kitchen, Shoreditch, London

THE MONTH
LIFE ON MARS
BEAVERTOWN
NECK OIL

Classic Rock Presents

2017 Mid-Year Preview

There have already been some classic rock albums this year but, as a wise man once said, you ain't seen nothing yet. We look ahead to the records we're eagerly anticipating...

It's alive: recording at EastWest Studios in Hollywood.

MAIN: ANNIE LESSER; INSET: KEVIN SHIRLEY

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION

Love. Death. Dolphins. Black Country Communion's fourth album is full of surprises – not least that the derailed-but-now-reconvened supergroup made a new record at all.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Back in Black: (l-r) Jason Bonham, Glenn Hughes, Joe Bonamassa, Derek Sherinian.

When the end came, four years ago, it seemed terminal. After three well-regarded albums, Black Country Communion's two principal members, Glenn Hughes and Joe Bonamassa, had reached a very public impasse. The bassist seemed desperate to fill the tour diary; the guitarist spoke of feeling "bullied" by "King Hughes" on a rainy-day project that was spiralling out of control. The last time I interviewed Bonamassa, he didn't mince his words: "I can tell you this. The original line-up of Buddy Holly And The Crickets – including Buddy Holly himself – has a better chance of a reunification than Black Country Communion."

But here we are, talking to a chipper Hughes, whose patter darts between the Anglo-American supergroup's excellent fourth album (our world-first interview comes with the caveat that we're not allowed to reveal its title) and breezy assurances that all those whispers of bad blood were so much hot air. "I've no reason to fib," he shrugs. "There was never a big falling out with Joe and I. I think it was pretty much invented by members of the press. You guys want to sell magazines. Joe and I are as tight as you can get right now. There's love on this record."

With respect to BCC drummer Jason Bonham and keyboard player Derek Sherinian, the dynamic between Hughes and Bonamassa is BCC's main event. Hughes recalls the moment their dance resumed: "I've been so busy in my world. Since the last album, I've had open-heart surgery, a couple of new knees. I got inducted into the Hall Of Fame last April. First person that called me up when I got home was Joseph. So we meet for dinner and get to talking: how great it would be to make another album. Things are meant to happen in life. And this record was meant to happen. If I may be so bold, BCC has made some great music. The key was to make sure the new material was worthy."

Whereas Hughes claimed to have written the bulk of past albums (let's not open *that* can of worms), last summer Bonamassa visited the Hughes's California home for multiple co-writing sessions. The resulting 11 songs include strings, piano and Celtic motifs, without sacrificing the hard-rock crunch of old. "Our fans are musical and they'll get into it," Hughes says. "We made sure there weren't many slow songs, although there are some. There's one really dense song about the dolphin project that I'm involved with. I think the album is going to get a lot of radio play, a lot of push."

In January the quartet were ready to go to EastWest Studios in Hollywood with producer Kevin Shirley. "That's where Sinatra recorded, back in the forties and fifties," Hughes says. "It's the biggest room in LA, and we wanted that, for the Bonham influence. The chemistry was immediate. When I'm standing in front of Jason, the game is on. This is a band that plays live. Even Joe's solos are recorded live. That's unheard of for a band of this generation. But that's the way it should be done."

However, on day three of the recording sessions came black news.

"I got a call that my mum was sick," Hughes explains. "Day four, I had to fly back to the UK. I've had both of my parents die within nine months. My dad died as I was getting my award at the Hall Of Fame, then my mum died on February first. I had to sing this album after my mother had passed away. And the band were all feeling what I was going through. The way that Joe played – very dramatic, heart-wrenching – just tore me up."

> "THE KEY WAS TO MAKE SURE THE NEW MATERIAL WAS WORTHY."
> GLENN HUGHES

This time around, Hughes handles all the vocals on the album, Bonamassa apparently preferring the simple pleasures of playing blistering guitar.

"I got to pour out my heart about life and what happens before people die," says Hughes. "It's not a solemn album, but I don't shy away from anything. I have no fear in what I write. I'm not going all divine on you here, but I think it's a very spiritual rock album. Let's be clear, man, without becoming too morbid, we're all getting older. We've lost Bowie, Chris Cornell, Gregg Allman – three good friends. You never know who's going to be next. You never know what's around the corner."

The same goes for BCC: "What I've learnt from reading my spiritual books is that I can't stop anybody from doing what they want to do. All I can say is that the cards are on the table for Black Country Communion to continue the path. It's our desire to make music and play live as much as we possibly can. And we will. We will play."

ETA: September

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN

Having learned a few things from the big boys, they're back with a blend of old-school and modern rock.

Tyler Bryant is fired up. But then so would you be if you'd recorded an album that never came out. That's what happened to the Texan hotshot and his band The Shakedown last year. But they not letting it get them down.

What exactly happened with the album you finished but wasn't released?

Tyler Bryant: Our record label at the time, Republic, wouldn't put it out. It was the same old bullshit: "You guys don't have a radio single, so therefore we're not going to do anything." So we decided to write another full-length album and put it out on a different label.

What does the new album sound like?

TB: A lot of the songs were developed after we toured with AC/DC. That gave us a better understanding of what works in bigger venues.
Noah Denney (bass): After the AC/DC and Guns N' Roses tours, you go: "How do you write a song to get the crowd really rabid?" I think it's the best blend of old-school rock and modern rock we've done.
TB: We're going to call it *Tyler Bryant And The Shakedown* – for us it's a defining record.

What's the biggest tune on the record?

ND: There's a song called *Don't Mind The Blood*. That song's basically: if it takes me bleeding to achieve something for the greater good of humanity, then don't mind the blood if it gets the job done.
TB: *Jealous Me* is maybe my favourite song on the record. It was written at a time when I was feeling protective of my girl: "Who's that asshole hanging out with her while I was away?" But then I'm the asshole for thinking that.

Will we ever get to hear the unreleased record?

TB: I think we'll work things out. My plan is to start a revolution. I want to get enough people together going: "We demand this music!" **DE**

ETA: October/November

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN: TINA KORHONEN/PRESS

LIVING COLOUR

Politically charged and potent, their new album is attuned to events in the present while inspired by music from the past.

Words: **Dave Everley**

When Living Colour started work on their sixth album, *Shade*, the world was still the right way up. Barack Obama had been in the White House for three years, and Donald Trump was just a billionaire reality TV star with political ambitions. That was 2012. Since then, well… you know the story.

"You start on a project with all these grand ambitions, and things go sideways," says guitarist Vernon Reid. "We started making this record when Obama was President, but we were still talking about certain concepts. We knew that the idea of 'post-racial' anything was inherently bogus. I actually think a lot of things have happened that have helped make this record weirdly prescient."

The New Yorkers may have started *Shade* half a decade ago, but it's perfectly attuned to everything that's happening today, from the Black Lives Matter Movement (on the jagged *Come On*) to the unhealthy agendas of sections of the US media (*Program*). Singer Corey Glover has described it as a "blues record", and it is, in spirit as much as sound.

"I don't see it as a blues rock record," says Reid. "I see it as an attempt to reconnect hard rock and metal to the blues roots. The blues has to

Living Colour: a long time coming, but worth the wait.

be a vibrant, living, changing entity. What has been lost to tradition is that the blues was a wild-eyed, contentious idea. It was extraordinarily sophisticated and avant-garde at the same time."

The spark for the album came from the cover of Robert Johnson's *Preachin' Blues* which the band played at a 2012 tribute gig to mark the centenary of the blues legend's birth. "We'd been scattered to the four winds, and we went on stage having had so little preparation," says Reid. "Not only did we manage to not get in the way of the moment, it also became this magical coming together. It was so well-received that night that we thought maybe this is what the next record is about."

Preachin' Blues is one of three politically charged covers on *Shade*, alongside Marvin Gaye's *Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)* and a rocked-up version of late hip-hop star The Notorious B.I.G.'s gangsta-rap anthem *Who Shot Ya?*.

"During sound-check, Corey would routinely go into the rhyme for *Who Shot Ya?*," says Reid. "And so we said: 'We should record that.' Corey decided to sing the song rather than rapping it, cos he's not really a rapper. The song is not at all an anti-gun polemic. It's very unapologetic in the idea of 'I gotta do what I gotta do'. The irony, of course, is what wound up happening to Biggie." [The rapper was shot and killed by unknown assailants in 1997.]

The album's closing track, *Two Sides*, features a guest appearance from another legendary figure, Parliament/Funkadelic ringleader and all-round gonzo-funk icon George Clinton ("We have a long history with the Maggot Overlord"). Reid's guitar playing on the track evokes the fluid brilliance of late P-Funk genius Eddie Hazel, whose 1972 showcase *Maggot Brain* remains one of the greatest guitar solos ever recorded. "That wasn't intentional," says Reid. "But there's a vibe of it. It was just one of those guitar soliloquies that had a huge impact on me."

The lengthy gestation period of the album may have, as Reid puts it, "validated" *Shade*, but it's not something they want to repeat. "I really hope not," the guitarist says, laughing. I can't even begin to guess what's going to happen in America."

> "I SEE THIS RECORD AS AN ATTEMPT TO RECONNECT HARD ROCK AND METAL TO THE BLUES ROOTS."
> VERNON REID

ETA: September 8

LIVING COLOUR: TRAVIS SHINN/PRESS

THE CADILLAC THREE

With a plan to deliver new music every year, unlike their namesake, they don't have cruise control.

Clearly not ones to let the grass grow beneath their feet, Nashville's Cadillac Three return with new album *Legacy* in August, just over a year since releasing their last one, *Bury Me In My Boots*. And if you think that's speedy work, consider that half of the album had been laid down within days of its predecessor hitting the shops.

"We had a few songs written, like *Dang If We Didn't* and *Ain't That Country,* when we finished the last record," explains drummer Neil Mason. "We were excited to get the last record out and get right back in the studio. We had shows the week the album came out last August, and then we had a few days off the following week. We booked some studio time and cut the first half of this new album, then finished it in December."

Comprised of songs written while the band were out on the road, the self-produced *Legacy* was recorded in two Nashville studios 20 or so miles apart: the bulk of it in Ronnie's Place, plus one track at The Castle – a building rumoured to have been a hideaway for legendary 1920s gangster Al Capone. And according to Mason, the band came away with a real mixed bag.

"Stuff like *American Slang* falls in line with things like *Graffiti* and *White Lightning* from the last record, which are similar vibe-wise. The title track is the most stripped-down song we've ever done, and then there's *Tennessee*, which is more old-school, and we have *Take Me To The Bottom* that's more soulful."

With a UK tour in November, you would imagine that the Three (completed by frontman Jaren Johnston and bassist Kelby Ray) won't be back in the studio any time soon. But it turns out you might be mistaken.

"We're already starting to think about the next album!" Mason says. "We have spent a lot of our career feeling that we had more music to put out than we were putting out. We made a pact to try and put music out every year. That's a good challenge and it keeps us creative." **RC**

ETA: August 25

Alex Veale in the studio: sticking with "that classic tradition of rock'n'roll".

TAX THE HEAT

After "the boldest and brashest debut" of 2016, the sharp-dressed men suit up for their second album of rhythm and blues-infused rock'n'roll.

Words: **Fraser Lewry**

If there had been a competition at this year's Download Festival for the event's sharpest dressed men, West Country blues rockers Tax The Heat would have strolled off with the title. Clad in tailored threads, with immaculately sculpted hair and the finest of leather shoes, the band stood out like Savile Row regulars in a field full of bedraggled rockers. After opening the Second Stage in 2014 with barely an EP under their belt, they returned this year a much more experienced band, and are now preparing to release their second album.

Second albums are supposed to be difficult, but after the reception their first, *Fed To The Lions*, received, Tax The Heat aren't fazed by the prospect of following up a record we described as "arguably the boldest and brashest debut" of 2016. For that follow-up, they headed back to The Chairworks studio in Castleford, and producer Chris Goss (Masters Of Reality frontman, Queens Of The Stone Age producer, desert-rock legend) was once again in the driving seat. If it ain't broke…

"Chris was a massive part of the first album," says frontman Alex Veale, "and it made sense for him to be a big part of this one as well. It feels like a complete unit in the studio when we have him around. It all flows naturally."

"It's much more cohesive than the first album," he adds. "Your first album is taken from years of being in a band, so it's all your best bits and your strongest songs. But you've got a short amount of time to write a second album, so it's more about a snapshot in time. It's about where you are at that moment, and I think it's caught us at a *really* good point."

Alex Veale and producer Evansson talk songs and sounds.

"THE ALBUM IS THE SUM OF US. WE'VE FOUND OUT WHO WE ARE." ALEX VEALE

"I definitely felt the pressure," says guitarist JP Jacyshyn. "But it's good pressure. It helps your creativity. You've *got* to do it."

Who knows where this album might take them. Royal Blood can't be the only band to 'do a Royal Blood'. And for all the spectacular noise about the Brighton duo's spectacular noise, Tax The Heat's own brand of explosive R&B is less reliant on effects pedals and more inclined to strap a giant chorus on to one of those thundering riffs.

The band are clearly having fun. They joke about releasing a cauliflower-themed concept album, about learning to drink, about riding the chilli highs from the studio's jerk chicken dinners, and about a bizarre night out at a local karaoke-cum-pub-quiz night, where a father and son duo sang Elton John songs to each other. They also talk with pride about the album they've just made, about how good it sounds, and about the thing that happens when four young men in a band spend a lot of time together and the alchemy that ensues.

"Everything we want to do is about that classic tradition of rock'n'roll," says Veale. "The album is the sum of us. We've found out who we are."

ETA: Not yet scheduled

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

News that Josh Homme had plumped for pop poster boy Mark Ronson to produce QOTSA's new album *Villains* had us checking the calendar in case it was April 1. A surprising choice it may be, but the early signs are pretty good: lead single *The Way You Used To Do* has the band's trademark sleazy swagger.

Recorded at United Studios in LA, and without a single guest appearance, *Villains* sees Homme evolving the band's dirty desert sound. "The most important aspect of making this record was redefining our sound," he said. "If you can't make a great first record, you should just stop. But if you can make a great record, and you keep making records and your sound doesn't evolve, you become a parody of that original sound." **RC**

ETA: August 25

KADAVAR

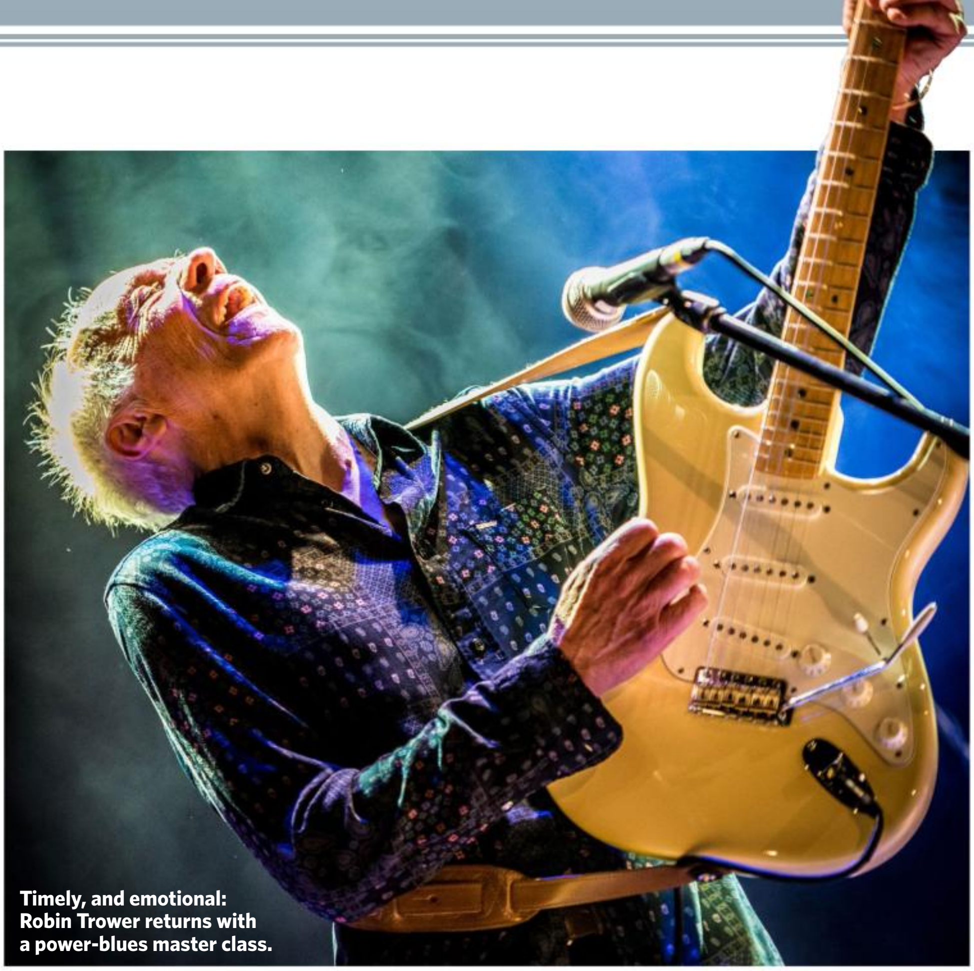
After seven years recording in a dank Berlin basement, Kadavar decided to construct their own studio. "We spent four months knocking down walls, doing all the wiring," recalls frontman Lupus Lindemann. "When we were able to play music again it was like being released. We were so happy."

It's ironic then that fourth album *Rough Times* is "darker and more evil", with a Sabbath-style heaviness, Hawkwind trip-outs and a post-Trump social conscience. The actual recording saw the band break new ground in that they used overdubs, and even added a dash of organ. "We just wanted to try other instruments, other shades and sounds," explains Lindemann.

The album has a striking cover image, too: a sunbather with a skeleton face and a scar from a heart amputation. "It's our generation," Lindemann says. "We're lying in the sun, not doing anything about the evil that surrounds us." **WS**

ETA: September

ROBIN TROWER: LAURENCE HARVEY/PRESS; QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE: ANDREAS NEUMANN/PRESS



Timely, and emotional: Robin Trower returns with a power-blues master class.

ROBIN TROWER

Projected sales might be modest, but Trower's power remains undimmed. "This is the best thing I've ever done," he tells us.

Words: **Henry Yates**

The challenge facing every 60s guitar god is to stay relevant in the modern age. And yet on August 4 Robin Trower will release what he considers some of his best music to date on *Time And Emotion*, its title a fair indication of the weighty themes within.

"I liked the title, because I've been around a long time," chuckles the 72-year-old, whose breakthrough came with Procol Harum in 1967, "and emotion is the key to what I do. *The Land Of Plenty* is my reaction to the riots in America and an overview of poverty in the West. *You're The One* is about my late wife. *Bitten By The Snake* is about people being hooked on drugs, basically. It's a little bit preachy, that lyric, I know, but these are the things I feel strongly about."

"FOR ME, IT'S MORE ABOUT MAKING GREAT MUSIC THAN ABILITY ON THE INSTRUMENT."
ROBIN TROWER

Did he consider including a few lighter moments? "When something is fundamentally blues-influenced, I'm not sure how positive it can be. But it can still be uplifting, that's the key to it. There's always a certain amount of joyfulness to my guitar playing, whatever I'm doing. It's the most fun you can have – at my age, anyway."

Despite his 'music before fretwork' outlook, Trower doesn't spare the Stratocaster on these 11 tracks, many of them cocksure, wah-drenched power-blues with a hint of 1974's solo benchmark *Bridge Of Sighs*. "I think there may be elements to this album that surprise people," he says, "but there is what I would call some vintage stuff on there.

"*Returned In Kind*," he says of the Hendrixian, seven-minute, slow-blues centrepiece, "is the best thing I've ever done, I think. It's got all the things you're aiming for: groove, funk, soul. My other favourite on there is *What Was I Really Worth To You*, which harkens back to the stuff I did earlier in my career, back in the 70s. As a guitar player, I think I'm always trying to be more soulful. It's not about speed or anything like that. It's all about: how soulful can you make one note? For me, it's more about making great music than ability on the instrument."

Soul, admits Trower, doesn't sell like it used to. There will be just one UK concert on the back of *Time And Emotion* – he doesn't anticipate ringing tills. "There's not enough places to play where it's worthwhile doing," he says.

"But," he brightens, "the most important thing with this album is that it satisfies me that I've done something really good. That's the driving force. I'm trying to make better records. You're driving for something that's up ahead. You never get there, but you keep working at it."

ETA: August 4

FOO FIGHTERS

Fresh from their acclaimed performance at this year's Glastonbury, the Foos are set to release a new studio album, titled *Concrete And Gold,* in September. The band have also lined up a show at London's O2 Arena on September 19.

Concrete And Gold, produced by Greg Kurstin, is the band's ninth album. It will contain 11 songs, including *The Sky Is A Neighborhood, Run, Happy Ever After (Zero Hour)* and *Make It Right*. Dave Grohl believes that it sounds like "Motörhead doing *Sgt Pepper* by The Beatles", thanks to "some of the most insanely heavy Foo Fighters riffs ever, with lush harmonic complexities".

Grohl told the BBC that the new album features "a bunch" of guests, including "the biggest pop star in the world. They sing back up on one of the heaviest songs on the record, and we're not telling anyone who it is." **DL**

ETA: September 15

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

As Mikko Von Hertzen fills us in on the Finnish band's new album, *VII: War Is Over*, we're taken all over the map. The frontman kicks off the journey by revealing that the new record's roots can be traced back to its hard-hitting predecessor, 2015's *New Day Rising*.

"With the last album we had a clear vision of making a killer rock album with 'America' written all over it," he says. "Maybe as a rebound, we now felt like turning back to more proggy and landscape-y expression."

Mikko went India to work on lyrics. "I lived for many years in south India. I go there for better concentration and vibes."

He then conjures up images of Scotland when choosing his standout track from the new record. "The main theme of *New Terrain* is played with bagpipes. Took us a while to learn how to play bagpipes, but we nailed it." **RC**

ETA: October

ALTER BRIDGE

With a live-plus-rarities album, Albert Hall shows and solo Myles Kennedy material on the horizon, it's a busy 2017 and beyond.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Myles Kennedy has a 'to do' list that would make lesser rock stars blanch. Between his duties as the frontman with Alter Bridge and his long-gestating solo career, Kennedy has made sure his diary is clear for the rest of 2017 and beyond.

Last year Alter Bridge played their biggest ever headlining show, at London's 18,000-capacity O2 Arena. In October the band release a live album recorded at the gig, the not-so-cryptically titled *Live At The O2 Arena + Rarities*. An old-school 'greatest hits' set in all but name, it's the sound of a band reaching a new pinnacle.

"There was a lot of weight before that show, a lot of gravity knowing we were playing our biggest show," says Kennedy. "You tend to go in with a certain amount of anticipation. It was just a huge sigh of relief when we hit the last chord: 'Okay, I think we made it through this unscathed.'"

The *Rarities* part of the package brings together tracks that Alter Bridge have recorded for various international versions of their five albums to date, as well as a pair of previously unreleased tracks: *Cruel Sun* and *Solace*.

"We had all these songs hanging around in different places, so we figured we'd collect them all together," the singer explains. "We put

ALTER BRIDGE: CARLOS AMOEDO/PRESS

Alter Bridge: preparing to play with quite a few more strings than usual.

together the book for it, and I'm thinking: 'I don't even remember the lyrics to this one.' I had to sit down and try to decipher them all."

The new live album coincides with two shows the band will play at London's Royal Albert Hall, for which they'll be joined by an orchestra, in the grand tradition of Deep Purple's *Concerto For Group And Orchestra* and Metallica's *S&M*. While Kennedy is excited about experiencing the "sonic assault" of a live orchestra, he concedes that there are potential pitfalls.

"It's tricky every time you bring an orchestra into a rock environment – you have to be careful how you treat it," he says. "There will probably be a fair amount of deeper cuts in the set-list, some that we've never even played live. We'll probably start to incorporate some of those into our set, just so the band is familiar with them. It would be disastrous if we don't have our act together."

Alter Bridge certainly won't be the only thing occupying Kennedy's time in 2017. The bad news is that he's scrapped the solo album he's been talking about for the past few years. The good news is that he's written another one entirely from scratch.

"As a songwriter, songs have a shelf life in terms of where you were in life when you wrote them. I decided back in December that I wasn't going to put it out. That's when I started working my ass off doing another one. So I assembled another twenty-five songs that I'm sitting on."

According to Kennedy, the new tracks are more stripped-down and organic. "I set out parameters in terms of what I could use as a writer. I had my 1944 Gibson J-45 and an early-30s National Triolian Resonator – they were pretty much the two guitars I used for inspiration. There's definitely a blues vibe to it, but at the same time I was listening to a lot of Nick Drake."

> "WE HAD ALL THESE SONGS HANGING AROUND SO WE FIGURED WE'D COLLECT THEM ALL TOGETHER."
> MYLES KENNEDY

He's cagey about details – no album or song titles – but he does reveal that it will be based on a very specific theme: "It's documenting what my mother and brother and I went through when my father passed away when I was a kid. It talks about that journey, and our exodus from Boston. It's a very personal record."

ETA: Live At The O2 Arena + Rarities is released on September 8

KING KING: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

KING KING

The blues-rockers look to their early-70s heroes for inspiration on their ambitious fourth album.

"These days we have no choice but to write on the road," King King frontman Alan Nimmo tells us just before he heads into the studio to finish work on his band's new album, *Exile & Grace*. "We used to fit in writing when we were at home and were a bit idle, but that doesn't happen any more. It's more singing ideas into a phone on the road."

It's a situation born out of the success that King King have notched up over the last few years. Support slots with John Mayall and Thunder have helped them amass a loyal following, putting the band out on the road for longer periods and ramping up expectations for this, their fourth album. Nimmo's reaction to that pressure has been to write a record true to the band's roots. He explains that this basically means it's King King, just even better than before.

"Every time you make an album it's stick or twist," he says. "You bite your nails wondering how it will be received. Whatever we do, we manage to find the King King sound – it always sounds like us! It sounds like King King but just with a step up in quality."

Not that there aren't some changes. *Exile & Grace* sees some of Nimmo's 70s rock leanings come closer to the surface than they have done on previous albums. "The more comfortable I get as a songwriter, the more my early influences come to the fore," he explains. "That's bands like Free and Bad Company."

King King clearly have faith that the new record, which was self-produced and mixed by Chris Sheldon (Foo Fighters, Feeder), will connect with fans – they've already booked what will be their biggest UK headline shows at the back end of this year, including one at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire.

"We're taking a chance on [bigger venues] and hopefully it will work. If we've overstepped the mark then so be it. I'm pretty confident, though, that we'll do alright out of it. We want to keep going and take this band to wherever we can by moving forward all of the time." **RC**

ETA: Early September

SHINEDOWN

Following their recent European support slot with Iron Maiden, the American modern rockers are getting ready to begin work on their sixth studio album.

"We're still writing, but twelve songs are demoed and ready to record," reveals frontman Brent Smith. "We're looking to start that process by October, with a release set up [via Atlantic] in March 2018. It will be preceded by a single."

As yet untitled, the new record is set to be the band's first ever conceptually themed album.

"Because we're so early on [in the cycle of things] it's kind of hard to explain what it will be about," Smith explains cautiously. "The best I can say is that it's about the fight between a person and his or her depression, almost as if that depression takes a form of its own… It's about someone who must learn how to live with their disorder. It's quite cerebral but, believe me, the songs are still badass and catchy." **DL**

ETA: March 2018

SAXON

In 2015, South Yorkshire's original NWOBHM forerunners proved their ongoing value with the powerful *Battering Ram*. Their next album, titled *Thunderbolt*, is being completed as we speak.

Several songs are finished, including a tribute to Lemmy that's fittingly named *They Played Rock'n'Roll*, in which the band look back on their days spent touring with Motörhead. "I asked bassist Nibbs Carter to write me a song that was similar to Motörhead," said frontman Biff Byford. "I just put some lyrics to it. It's about the *Bomber* tour – we first met them when we supported them on that tour – and the album *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith*, and the subsequent 80s scene."

Byford says we can also, potentially, expect a duet with somebody "quite hardcore".

The album release will be followed by a world tour. If you can't wait until then, you can catch them headlining Ramblin' Man Fair on July 28. **PG**

ETA: January 2018

The Truck: going for the big one this time.

MONSTER TRUCK

It wasn't broke, so there was nothing to fix with album three, says their guitarist. "We want people to get what they expect."

Words: **Rich Chamberlain**

"Our sound today is close to what it was in the inception of the band nine years ago and we're sticking to it," says Monster Truck guitarist Jeremy Widerman. "Sometimes my favourite bands have changed too much too fast. We are careful to avoid that. We want people to get what they expect."

And why not? The chest-beating, southern-tinged rock all over their debut album *Furiosity* and the 2016 follow-up *Sittin' Heavy* won the band plenty of fans, plaudits and career-boosting support slots (more on that last one later). But while the Truck's as-yet-untitled new record might be in the same vein as *Sittin' Heavy*, Widerman is confident that it's also a step up.

"I hate saying stuff like this," he says, "but everyone is saying this will be our best record yet. I'm not sure I could have confidently said that before we released *Sittin' Heavy*. We liked it, but we weren't sure it eclipsed everything else we had done. It wasn't worse than the first album, but it wasn't decidedly better. It was more of a case of it being just another Monster Truck record. We want to go bigger this time. We want everyone to go: 'These guys aren't fuckin' around.'"

> "EVERYONE IS SAYING THIS WILL BE OUR BEST RECORD YET."
> JEREMY WIDERMAN

Widerman enthuses that the band recently hit a creative purple patch, writing more than 30 songs in a rare three weeks at home between tours. The plan was to record in the early summer, but then the matter of a support slot on Deep Purple's European tour came up. In fact, when Widerman speaks to *Classic Rock*, he's deep in the bowels of Berlin's Mercedes-Benz Arena where they will be playing the penultimate show of the tour.

While Monster Truck may have fallen a little behind schedule, he says the band will enter the studio in the coming weeks to work on the new record, with SikTh's Dan Weller the somewhat surprising choice of producer.

"It's a left turn for us to go with someone younger and outside of the continent," Widerman admits. "A lot of people expected us to go with a gigantic, Grammy-award-winning name. We decided to go with someone that's hungry and is willing to go the extra mile every night with us."

And what rewards does Widerman envisage being in store for going that extra mile?

"We want to quadruple our fan base with this album," he says. "We want to do that to the point where the majority of people getting into the new record don't realise we've been together for almost a decade, and they can go back into our back catalogue and get into that as well."

ETA: Early 2018

MONSTER TRUCK: MATT BARNES/PRESS; SHINEDOWN: DARREN DOANE/PRESS

Lionize's Nate Bergman and (inset) Henry Upton working on their biggest-sounding record yet.

LIONIZE

Maryland's funkiest reggae-rock crew return with their most stadium-friendly songs yet.

Words: **Polly Glass**

For more than a decade, Lionize have travelled the world taking their unique brand of funked up, reggae-infused rock to the masses. This experience has shaped them into a tight, vibrant band live and on record. It has also attached them fairly firmly to the 'reggae-rock' label, although that looks set to change with their sixth studio album.

"To step into new territory sonically we had to steep ourselves in The Beatles and Thin Lizzy and Parliament, and not really subscribe to the 'reggae-rock' thing," says singer/guitarist Nate Bergman. "The record has a really nice flow to it – it's a vibe thing and a real journey."

Co-produced by Clutch drummer Jean Paul Gaster (together with J.Robbins and the band themselves), *Nuclear Soul* has hints of their fellow Marylanders, alongside whiffs of Deep Purple and heavy soul. It promises to be the biggest-sounding thing they've done, musically and lyrically. Ongoing political tensions in the US have fuelled this to some extent. This new focus has added more topical energy to the sci-fi-infused lyrics they've become known for. Not that they've totally abandoned their otherworldly elements, but rather streamlined them into fiery, present-day-flavoured numbers like *Darkest Timeline* and *Ain't It A Shame*.

"We'll always be in love with sci-fi," Bergman says, "but there's a lot of intersection on the album where it's not really fiction any more – it's exactly where we are at."

With appearances at Ramblin' Man Fair and London's Black Heart drawing closer (July 29 and August 5 respectively), Lionize are more than ready to get their songs out there.

"This is the first album where we are excited about playing every track on the album," Bergman enthuses. "I am as happy and proud of the album as I could possibly be. I love it and can't wait for everyone to hear it. It's the best thing we've done."

ETA: September 8

GREGG ALLMAN

Rock lost yet another great back in May when Gregg Allman passed away. But it seems that despite his failing health he kept himself hard at work in the months prior to his death by putting the finishing touches to a brand new record. The fruits of his labour will be released in September.

Southern Blood was pieced together over the course of a couple of years, under the watchful eye of producer Don Was. The record is Allman's first solo release since 2011's *Low Country Blues*. Details of exactly what we can expect from the album are sketchy at present, and Allman's manager Michael Lehman reveals that that is how Gregg wanted it. Lehman told *Variety* magazine that the album is a mixture of covers and originals, but "I really can't say much more beyond that. Gregg really wanted to keep [information about the album], tight and I have to respect his wishes – he wanted to surprise his friends and his fans. But I think it's a record that everyone's really going to be excited to hear. His vocals are so compelling, and hearing them and knowing where he was in his life's journey, it's just chilling, honestly." **RC**

ETA: September

Judas Priest's Rob Halford.

AND IN OTHER NEWS...

With a remarkably sunny Download and Glastonbury in the bag, the rest of 2017 looks similarly bright on the live front. One of our favourite rock festivals, Ramblin' Man Fair, returns to Maidstone on July 29-30, starring ZZ Top, Saxon, Black Star Riders, Rival Sons and UFO, with loads more on the bill. Then in Derbyshire on August 9-12 it's the turn of the world's happiest heavy festival, Bloodstock, where Megadeth, Ghost, Skindred, Black Moth and many more likeminded beasts will be vying for your attention. In October, Seether and Kentucky Headhunters both play shows in the UK, while Royal Blood, Michael Schenker and Opeth embark on tours here in November.

Before that, 80s hero George Thorogood releases his first ever solo album (August 4), bonkers gypsy-punks Gogol Bordello have their new album *Seekers And Finders* coming soon (August 25), and Paradise Lost release their fifteenth LP, *Medusa*, in September.

Looking further ahead, British heavy metal titans Judas Priest are quietly working on their eighteenth studio album. "We're still doing what we love to do," singer Rob Halford told Planet Rock, of their as-yet-untitled record. "Priest is a working band more than anything else. It's that Midlands ethic, the work ethic of anybody that goes to work… And now we're moving through into other stages, we're preparing for another big world tour, getting stage designs sorted, lighting designs sorted…"

Meanwhile, over in the US, Pennsylvanians Halestorm are hard at work on the follow-up to 2015's *Into The Wild* with producer Nick Raskulinecz (Rush, Mastodon, Ghost et al). "It's been pretty epic so far," singer/guitarist Lzzy Hale has said. "We have a lot of tracks."

Grunge veterans Alice In Chains are also in the studio making a new album. No titles or precise details – in fact nothing at all – had been revealed as we went to press, but it's expected in early 2018. Also in 2018, Megadeth are expected to release a new record, and Steven Wilson will return to London's Royal Albert Hall, among many other UK venues, to showcase his upcoming new album *To The Bone*, which hits the shops next month (August 18). Even further ahead, most likely in the second half of 2018, Muse are hoping to have a new album, but have also said fans can expect new songs before then.

To keep abreast of all the music news as it comes in, head to classicrockmagazine.com

JUDAS PRIEST: REX

TAKING ON THE WORLD

In the autumn of 1977, it looked as if **Queen**'s reign might be over. Instead the band rose to the challenge, hit back with the globally successful *News Of The World* album and ruled once more.

Words: **Mick Wall**

Friday, October 28, 1977. It should have been the day that marked the end of Queen's reign. The future of their sixth studio album, *News Of The World*, released that day, looked bleak at best. A year before, their previous album, *A Day At The Races*, had received such a critical battering that Freddie Mercury's days of bringing opera to the masses, darling, now seemed decidedly numbered.

A Day At The Races, the follow-up to *A Night At The Opera* – their *Bo Rap*-containing 1975 breakthrough international hit – was considered flaccid by comparison. The moment where the group's desire to push the musical envelope crumbled into self-indulgent parody. The worst accusation of all: that Queen in the studio had begun to tread water; that having found the magic formula for success they now simply joined the dots and offered up the same again – only not different.

At a time when punk rock was considered the new critical yardstick, Queen suddenly epitomised everything about the old rock aristocracy that was now held in contempt: massive production, back-arching guitars and the once glorious, now oddly out of step image of Freddie Mercury preening in front of the audience, wishing them all "champagne for breakfast".

As if to ram the point home, on the very same day that *News Of The World* was released came *Never Mind The Bollocks… Here's The Sex Pistols*. The vast gulf between what was now regarded as the spiky, blades-drawn future and the flatulent, fairy-dust past was thrown into even sharper relief when one compared Johnny Rotten's *God Save The Queen* with Queen's own bombastic version of the national anthem which still closed their shows.

> **"The most popular misconception is that Freddie took himself seriously."**
> **Brian May**

Speaking with me some years later, Brian May – the former PhD student studying Motions Of Interplanetary Dust, who'd fashioned his favourite guitar out of a fireplace, which he played with an old sixpenny piece for a plectrum – insisted that the band had remained impressively unmoved by such accusations. He gave a knowing chuckle as he recalled: "The most popular misconception of people outside the people who 'get it', as you would say, is that Freddie took himself seriously. They didn't understand that although he took his work incredibly seriously, there was always that element of self-parody, if you like, in Freddie. He was always slightly tongue-in-cheek, there was always a little twinkle in his eye. And I think that's what was missed by the outside world. It never mattered to Freddie, though. It never bothered him. It was like, they either get it or they don't."

In fact, what nobody had anticipated when *News Of The World* was released in the punk-dominated autumn of 1977 was exactly how much we were about to 'get it' from Queen – to the tune of seven million sales worldwide, making it the most successful Queen album to date.

"After that we stopped worrying about punk or what the critics had to say," Roger Taylor told me. "We stopped worrying about anything…"

Although Queen were loath to admit it, the thinking behind *News Of The World* had in fact been more than a little influenced by the lacklustre reception *A Day At The Races* had received – and not just from the critics. Designed very much as what their former producer Ray Thomas Baker decried as a record that "absolutely screamed 'sequel'", it had sold less than a third of what *A Night At The Opera* had sold in both Britain and America, and less than half what it had sold worldwide. Not a flop, but not "the way things should be going", as Taylor delicately put it. May reluctantly conceded that it "may have been over-produced".

Any thoughts of simply aiming for a third bite of the same formulaic cheery were finally dashed when Groucho Marx refused them permission to call the album *Duck Soup*, which would have been the third time in a row they had 'borrowed' the

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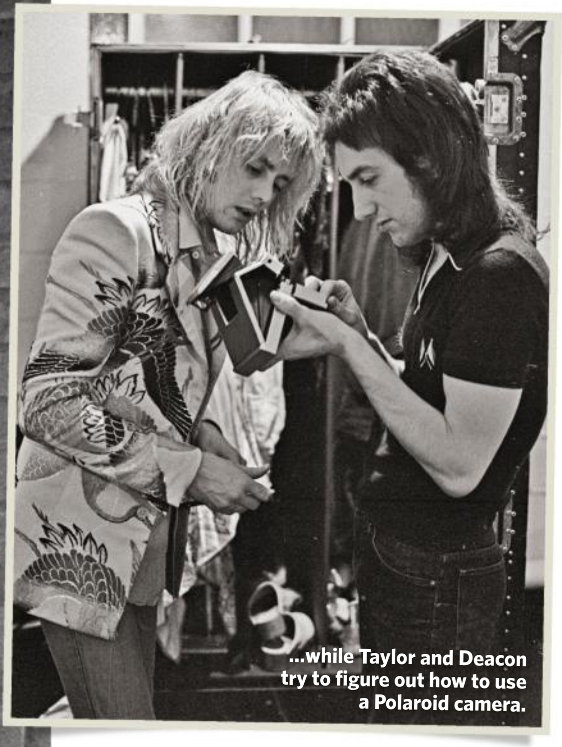
May takes photos in stereo...



...while Taylor and Deacon try to figure out how to use a Polaroid camera.

title of a Marx Brothers film. In fact Marx responded by saying they could have the title of his next movie, though: *The Rolling Stones Greatest Hits*.

Whatever they did next, it became abundantly clear to everyone in Queen that the follow-up to *A Day At The Races* would have to be something a little different. They had taken more than three weeks to record *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Now, though, the buzz word around the new album was 'spontaneity'. To try to enforce this new sense of purpose, a mere two months were booked at Notting Hill's hip Basing Street Studios and Wessex Sound Studios, a former Victorian church in North London, with all writing and recording completed between July and September. With an American tour booked for November they would have to work faster than at any time before.

To help kick-start the sessions, Roger Taylor brought in demos of two tracks he'd recorded on his own earlier that summer. The first, *Sheer Heart Attack*, originally aborted from the sessions for the album of the same name in 1974, here with the drummer on lead vocals (replaced on the final album version by Mercury), and redirected as Taylor's 'answer' to punk. Punchy, repetitive, two-chord fury: '*Well you're just seventeen and all you wanna do is disappear/You know what I mean there's a lot of space between your ears…*' That told them snot-gobblers.

The second, *Fight From The Inside*, was essentially more of the same, although set against a less impatient, rock-steady beat, with Taylor kept on lead vocals, and again having a not-so-sly dig at the punks who saw the 28-year-old idol as now somehow past it. *'You're just another picture on a teenage wall, you're just another sucker ready for a fall…'*

"There was always this challenge of how far can we push things in any direction."

Brian May

It was the band's principle songwriters, Mercury and May, who came up with the most potent ripostes to any claim that Queen had lost their mojo, with two of the finest, most memorable and long-lasting tracks (after *Bohemian Rhapsody*) of their career: May's *We Will Rock You* and Mercury's *We Are The Champions*, both of which open the album, in that order.

A delicious coincidence, perhaps, but the fact that both tracks used the pronoun 'We' said a great deal about how the band saw themselves in terms of their own loyal fan base, and the slings and arrows they had suffered on their behalf. *We Will Rock You*, with its captivating 'boom-boom-tush' rhythm and whiplash vocals, topped off by that marvellously bugling guitar solo, was the first real rock anthem to gain traction since the heyday of what we now think of as classic rock. Populist, all-inclusive, this was the 'come on in, the water's fine' rock anthem at its most affecting. A song for the people to sing along to; to clap their hands and stamp their feet to. To march to! So much so that Queen would open every show they have ever done with it from then until their US tour this summer.

The 'We' in *We Are The Champions* was again meant as a you and me, in it together, banner call, but with more subtle, reflective intentions. Whatever the putative subject matter, Freddie's best songs were always, ultimately, about his favourite subject: himself. So, too, *Champions*, yet with its lines about having '*paid my dues*' and '*done my sentence, but committed no crime*' Freddie both invites us in to share his lonely bubble, and speaks up for us with his defiant declaration that '*we*' are the champions, '*my friends*', before paying the ultimate compliment when he sings, in his quavering sotto voice: '*You brought me fame and fortune, and everything that goes with it/I thank you all.*' Cue monumental guitar fresco. Towering emotions. Heart pounding, arms-aloft salutes, rivers of man-love… Seated at the piano, head thrown back like Judy Garland, Freddie would be both martyr to the cause and friend-indeed.

"I can understand some people saying *We Are The Champions* was bombastic," allowed May some years later. "But it wasn't saying Queen are the champions, it was saying all of us are. It made the concert like a football match, but with everyone on the same side."

Or as Freddie put it laughingly in an interview with the *Daily Mail* in the aftermath of the album's gigantic success: "To some people I'm still a bitch. I enjoy being a bitch. I enjoy being surrounded by bitches. I certainly don't go looking for the most perfect people. I'd find that boring. I'm like a mad dog about town. I like to enjoy life."

In a shrewd move as ever, *We Are The Champions* and *We Will Rock You* were paired as a double-A-

Taking a back seat. But Mercury and May were in the driving seat when it came to the songwriting for ***NOTW***.

side first single from the album. It became Queen's second-biggest-selling hit of all time, spending six months solid on the US chart and eventually sold more than five million copies there.

Such success could not have been taken for granted, though, while they hurriedly tried to finish the album by their self-imposed impossible deadline. Initially working out of Basing Street, where Bob Marley And The Wailers had just completed the *Exodus* album, the band scurried for ideas. In the end, Mercury contributed only three songs, *Champions, My Melancholy Blues* and *Get Down Make Love*, an overheated sex song that hints heavily at the singer's personal evolution from beautiful girls to handsome boys: *'You say you're hungry, I give you meat, I suck your mind, you blow my head…'* What these days might be called a little too much information. But thanks anyway, Freddie, for clearing that up.

"The subject of Freddie's sexuality never came up because it wasn't even mentioned within [the band]," Brian May later insisted to me. "Basically, because none of us had any idea that he might be different from us. Is that saying it the right way? I mean, we shared lots of flats and stuff, and I've seen Freddie disappear into rooms with lots of girls and screams would emerge, so, you know, we assumed that everything was fairly much the same way as we knew it. It was only very much later that we realised there was anything else going on with Freddie. I mean much, much later. We were on tour in the States – I don't even know what date that would have been, but on some fairly big tour – and suddenly he's got boys following him into a hotel room instead of girls. We're thinking, 'Hhmmm…'" he laughed affectionately. "And that's about the extent of it. Even then, obviously, it was never a problem. I always had plenty of gay friends, I just didn't realise that Freddie was one of them until much later."

In fact, by 1977 Freddie's sexuality had become abundantly clear to everyone around Queen. He had almost been publicly outed two years before, when a writer in Ohio was shown into Freddie's hotel room half an hour early and found him reclining on a pile of cushions, being fussed over by a group of barely-clad muscle-boys. "These are my servants, dear," Freddie had casually explained.

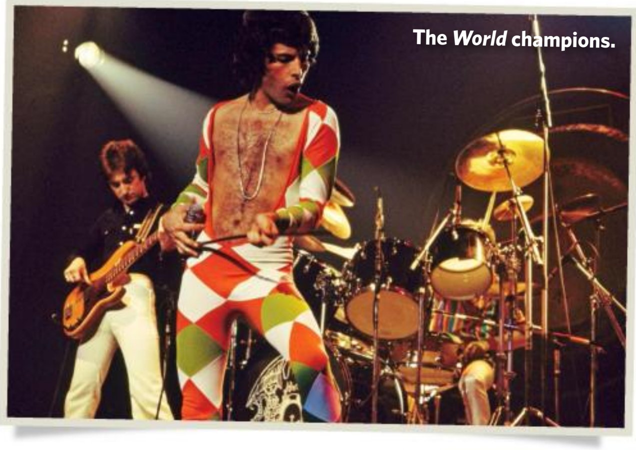
Although he still enjoyed the close friendship of former girlfriend Mary Austin, he had now bought Mary a luxury penthouse flat of her own in London, while he brought a new special friend, David Minns, into his home. By the time of recording *News Of The World*, though, Freddie had replaced Minns with a young American called Joe Fanelli.

"After seven and a half years," he and Mary had "come to an understanding," Mercury told a reporter in 1978. "I felt that as I'm on tour so much, Mary should have a life of her own."

Was this his way of saying they now enjoyed an 'open' relationship? "I'll go to bed with anything," he replied. "My sex drive is enormous. I live life to the full." Or, as he put it in an interview in 1976: "I sleep with men, women, cats, you name it."

The other song he wrote for the new album, *My Melancholy Blues*, was a ritzy-piano jazz-age pastiche with no backing vocals or guitars, just Freddie crooning like an old roué, a pebble beach of champagne corks at his feet, the first light of dawn peeping through the . curtains of his four-poster bedroom.

Indeed Freddie was now splitting his time between the recording studio and Sotheby's, buying an array of expensive antiques and trinkets, filling his Kensington home with Erte prints, Hokusai woodcuts and lacquered Japanese furniture. It was the same on tour, with various crew members recalling numerous occasions when Freddie would arrive breathless at the airport minutes before departure, with a cavalcade of assistants bearing antique furniture, ▷



The *World* champions.

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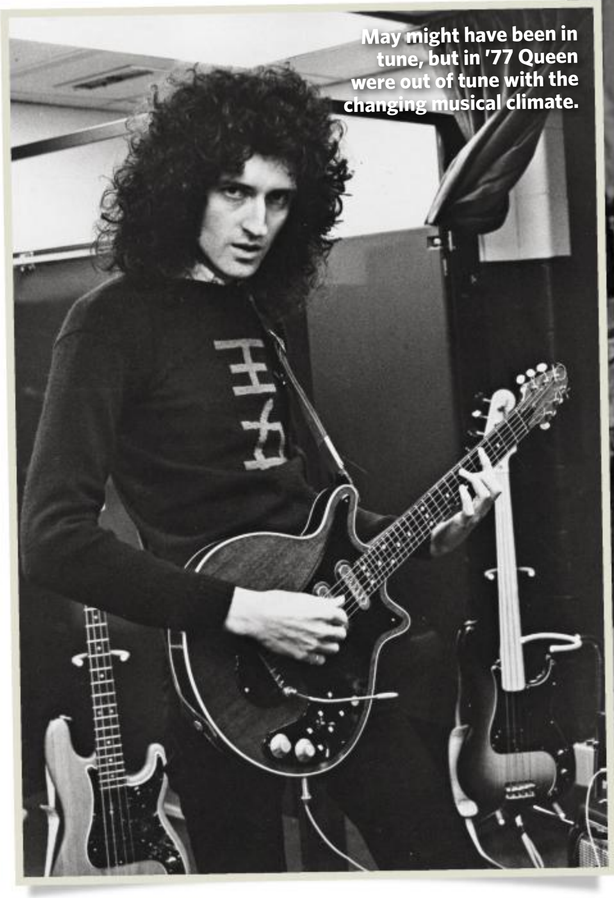


May might have been in tune, but in '77 Queen were out of tune with the changing musical climate.

"I've got an idea for the cover, fellas..." Taylor with a 1953 issue of the comic *Astounding Science Fiction*.

objets d'art, trunks full of clothes and the traditional wooden dolls which he liked to collected, and screech at his tour manager: "Freight it!"

In Japan the promoter would arrange for huge department stores to be opened specially for him at night, so he could go shopping without harassment. "The Japanese call it 'crazy shopping'," Freddie boasted. "All these assistants standing there and the place is entirely empty except for me."

But then he could afford such extravagances. By 1977 when *News Of The World* was being bolted together, they all could. Such was the combined total of their record sales and concert tour receipts in America that they were all earning individual annual salaries of around £500,000 (approximately £3.3m in today's money.).

As Freddie was happy to tell one reporter: "Darling, I'm simply dripping with money! It may be vulgar, but it's wonderful."

"*We Are The Champions* wasn't saying Queen are the champions, it was saying all of us are."

Brian May

Brian May did the real heavy lifting in terms of songwriting on the album, contributing four tracks, including *We Will Rock You*, two of which, *All Dead, All Dead* and *Sleeping On The Sidewalk*, he also sang lead vocals on – the first time it really hit home just how close May's voice was to Mercury's. The former is a lovely, gently paced piano ballad, with a haunting guitar figure coming like weak sunlight halfway through. The overall effect was not hampered in the least by the fact that the lyric was, May explained, "partially inspired" by the death of a beloved pet cat.

Sleeping On The Sidewalk sounds exactly like what it was: an impromptu jam on a day when Mercury wasn't in the studio, the guitarist indulging his Led Zeppelin blues-jam tendencies, with bassist John Deacon audibly hitting occasional bum notes and May chuckling heartily at the end of the track. Legend has it that the band didn't even know they were being recorded, but May would eventually cast doubt on that, although he did confirm that the track was recorded live in the studio, with his American-accented vocals added later. It's the sort of knock-about jam you might hear any rock band lean into during a quiet moment at soundcheck.

May's other contribution was made of much more substantial stuff. Indeed *It's Late* was one of the major highlights of *News Of The World*. At more than six minutes long, this was his idea, he explained, for a song conceived and performed as a three-act theatrical play – to the point where the verses are called 'acts' on the accompanying lyric sheet. But this was no prog extravaganza à la the 'black' and 'white' sides of *Queen II*. The guitars on *It's Late* are low-slung one moment, high-stepping the next, showing off the same 'tapping' technique that Eddie Van Halen would make such a virtue of when his band's debut *Van Halen* was released months later. (May revealed that he got the idea for the 'tapping' from a Texas guitarist named Rocky Athas, who he'd caught playing at Dallas club Mother Blues the previous year.)

Mercury sings this one, bringing the full force of his catlike vocals to the task.

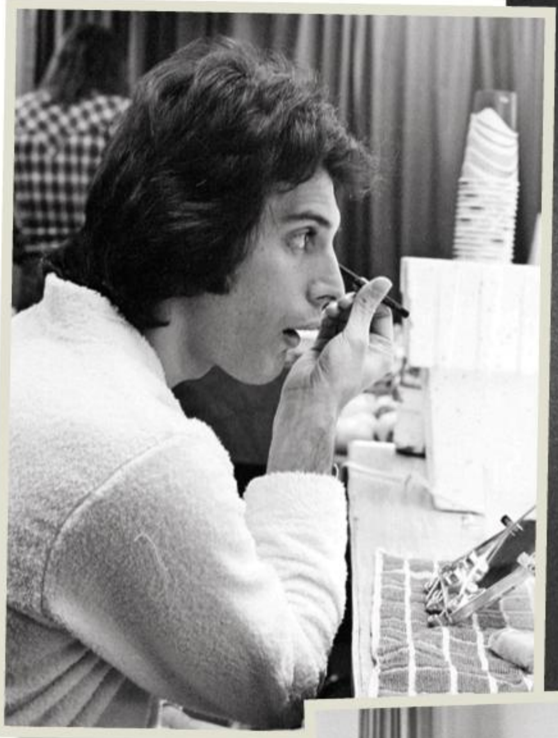
"It's another one of those story-of-your life songs," May would later explain via queenpedia.com. "I think it's about all sorts of experiences that I had, and experiences that I thought other people had, but I guess it was very personal. It's written in three parts. It's like the first part of the story is at home, the guy is with his woman. The second part is in a room somewhere, the guy is with some other woman, that he loves, and can't help loving. The last part is he's back with his woman."

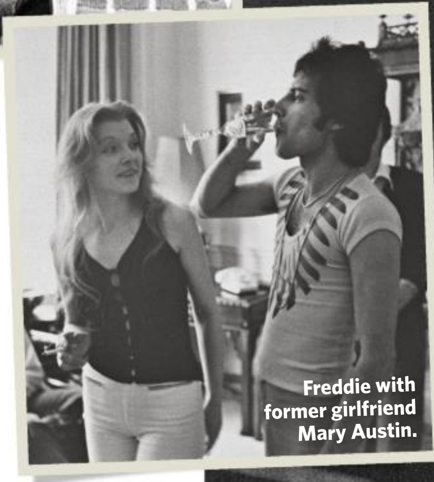
John Deacon contributed two of the album's best tracks in *Spread Your Wings* and *Who Needs You*. The latter is an utterly charming Spanish stroll, with Mercury's vocals panned entirely to one audio channel, and May and Deacon's Spanish guitars over on the other. Ah, the endless joys of stereo. Hard to fathom such simple pleasures now, but throw in May's maracas and Mercury's cowbell and you have the kind of track only Queen could have come up with in 1977.

Better still was *Spread Your Wings*. Destined to become the first Queen single without backing vocals, it was the follow-up single to *We Will Rock You/We Are The Champions*, and it understandably suffered by comparison. It bothered the world's charts not at all, yet it's one of the most masterful and affecting power ballads on the album.

"I suppose it seems like there's a rule that Freddie and I divide up most of the album, but it's not," May told British writer Mick Houghton. "John is a very slow writer, Roger has more material than the group has done, but it's just a question of choosing material to give each album the right balance. There are no hard and fast rules.

"In terms of contribution, the creative balance has shifted to become much more of a group thing… This is a very crucial time for the group. It's the point where it would be easy for us to go off and do separate things. But our strength, and that of any group, is that you realise how to use each other in that complementary fashion. That's the most important thing we have. It works not only on the music side, where we work on all the arrangements, but in the writing,





Freddie with former girlfriend Mary Austin.

The shy, retiring Freddie in his element and in sparkling form.

and in the very important psychological side where you're holding each other together on tour.

"We've come to know each other's strengths and weakness and can play off one another. It's a very delicate balance, and I'm very aware that it could very easily be upset by something even from outside which threatens the band internally. That's why it worries me if the media concentrate on me or Freddie. John and Roger are crucial to everything we do, they're not only a rhythm section. Nothing is farther from the truth. It's like John is the quiet one. All the press things about John say that, and it's true in many areas, but in others he's very much the leader."

The *News Of The World* tour opened in Portland, Maine, on November 11, 1977. With all 8,600 tickets sold out at the Cumberland County Civic Center, Queen unveiled their most spectacular stage show yet. Now touring with more than 60 tons of equipment, including a specially modified Crown lighting rig that had first been unveiled at the Earls Court gigs the previous June, this was to be lights, smoke, mirrors and the unsurpassable vision of Freddie Mercury in his absolute prime. The cost of building the production alone was more than £55,000 (roughly £350,000 in today's money), a fortune at a time when most rock shows cost a fraction of that. Day-to-day running costs came to nearly £5,000 (approx £30,000 today). It meant the tour would make a profit only in the huge American arenas Queen were now headlining, and actually lose money when they brought the whole shebang to Britain and Europe in 1978.

Apart from the spectacular production, the most obvious difference between Queen on tour now was their hair: with the exception of Brian May, who continued to wear his hair long, all the band members now sported short, on-trend hair. Another response to punk fashion, when John Deacon had been the first to trim his locks at the start of the year the others had laughed. Now, though, the even more fashion-conscious Taylor and Mercury followed suit. Not Sid Vicious spiky, my dear, don't be silly, more like a mid-70s 'getting good at the back' David Essex.

Sartorially they were also in 'transition', with only May still clinging steadfastly to his bell-bottom trousers, shoulder-peaked blouson and clogs, while Deacon now favoured skinny ties and Taylor vacillated between the two extremes, depending on his mood.

Even Freddie had shortened his noir-mane, although only as far as his shoulders, which along with the fulsome bushy sideburns gave him what local London barbers in those days referred to as 'an Elvis'. Of course, he hadn't stopped there, taking everything one step further by going on stage each night in a succession of different-coloured harlequin cat suits (or Nijinsky ballet costumes, as he had scolded the *NME*) open from throat to navel to reveal his impressively hirsute chest. "I'm into this ballet thing," he said. "That's why I'm trying to put across this Nijinsky costume; and trying to put across our music in a more artistic manner than before. A lot of people just dismiss it and say I'm wearing a silly little outfit, rather than being critical and saying that formal ballet may not be quite right for rock'n'roll."

When the *NME* ran the interview they did so under the headline: Is This Man A Prat? It was a theme that Sid Vicious took up with Freddie personally one evening during the making of *News Of The World*.

In a rather wonderful you-couldn't-make-it-up twist of fate, both Queen and the Sex Pistols had been recording their respective albums at ▷

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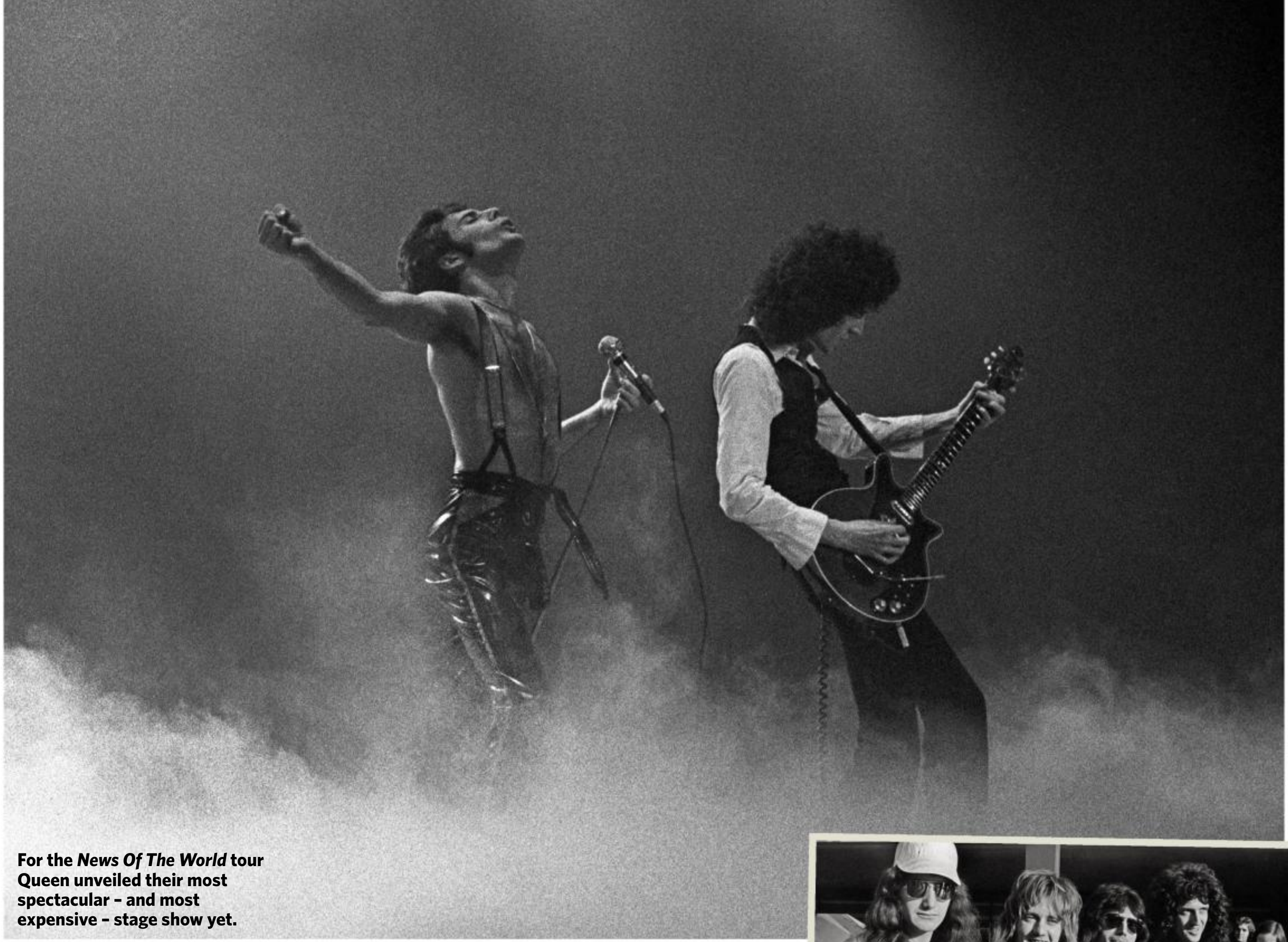

For the *News Of The World* tour Queen unveiled their most spectacular – and most expensive – stage show yet.

Millionaire's row: Deacon, Taylor, Mercury and May.

Wessex Studios that summer, the latter in the less plush Studio B. When Sid, in his usual bravura mood of offensive jollity, wandered into a Queen session where Freddie was tinkling nonchalantly at the ivories, he offered the greeting: "Have you succeeded in bringing ballet to the masses yet?" To which Freddie replied: "Ah yes, Mister Ferocious, my dear, we're doing our best." Then had him thrown out.

What Sid didn't know (he hadn't yet replaced Glen Matlock in the group) was that in another strange conflation of destinies, it was Queen who had been indirectly responsible for one of the career-defining moments of the Pistols' career when they turned down a spot on Thames TV's evening magazine show *Today* at the last minute. So EMI sent their latest signings, the Sex Pistols, to fill the slot with the show's notoriously louche presenter, Bill Grundy. A real sliding-doors moment in rock history if ever there was one.

Queen had first unveiled their new look when they performed a one-off mini-concert at London's New Theatre on October 6, in order to shoot the video for *We Are The Champions*, when members of the Queen fan club who'd agreed to come to the show were rewarded with advance copies of the *Rock/Champions* single. On stage in America, though, May was still performing his 15-minute guitar solo and Freddie was still camping it up, even if he did now throw the occasional leather jacket over his ballet costume.

"We stopped worrying about punk or what the critics had to say. We stopped worrying about anything."

Roger Taylor

Of course, a lot of the real fun on a Queen tour was now taking place off stage after the show. Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones might have set the benchmark for on-tour excess-all-areas in the 70s, but Queen seemed determined to uphold the tradition, punk be damned, by raising the bar several notches higher.

"As soon as we made it," Mercury said at the time, "we knew there were no longer any limits on what we could do." Or as May told *Classic Rock* in 2011: "It was deliberately excessive. Partly for our own enjoyment, partly for friends to enjoy, partly because it's exciting for record company people, and partly for the hell of it."

Queen's 24-date November/December 1977 US tour was such a triumph that even Mercury wondered – albeit only briefly – how they would ever top it. It was full of landmarks such as the two sold-out nights at New York's Madison Square Garden on December 1 and 2, and another two equally speedily sold-out shows at the Los Angeles Forum on December 21 and 22, and they were now making money hand-over-fist every time they stepped on stage. For their two sold-out shows at the 11,000-capacity Cobo Hall in Detroit, they picked off ticket receipts of $184,477 (approx. $750,000 now). For a show at the Boston Garden they were paid $122,959 (nearly $500,000 now).

The money was now pouring in so fast that in order not to hand over a lot of it to the tax man they were advised to become tax exiles from Britain. But again Mercury just flashed those famous teeth and laughed. "I've just been going on wild spending sprees," he declared. "I've been told to cool down because the taxman will be coming to take a large sum away. I've spent in the region of a hundred thousand pounds over the last three years."

Originally there had been tentative plans to take the *News Of The World* tour to Japan at the beginning of 1978. Queen had been big in Japan, with *A Night At The Opera* having bestowed Beatles-like status on them. Brian May recalled touching down in Tokyo for the first time, in 1975, and being greeted by more than 5,000 fans. "We had to be lifted over the heads of the fans," he said, just to get to their waiting limos. An even bigger Japanese tour had taken place in 1976 after *A Day At The Races* went to No.1. Now, with *NOTW* sitting pretty at No.3,

GETTY x2

the decision to return seemed obvious. Yet they didn't go for it.

Whatever the reason for not going to Japan, the first few months of 1978 were kept gig-free. Then, in April, came a six-week tour of Europe, before returning, at last, to Britain for five shows in May: the first two at the Bingley Hall in Stafford, followed by three nights at London's Empire Pool (now known as Wembley Arena).

With Mercury now shunning most music-paper interviews in favour of newspapers and highbrow magazines, this was to be the start of the era of Queen as aloof, unstoppable celebrity entities, far beyond the reach of greasy newsprint weeklies with their sanctimonious attitudes and grim new devotion to anti-rock.

It was the era in which the band journeyed so far down the rabbit hole of an unbridgeable fame that it would eventually reach its toxic nadir in 1984 with their now infamous shows at Sun City in Cape Town, South Africa. Only Bob Geldof's bold decision to include them as a major part of the massive Live Aid show at Wembley Stadium the following year offered Queen redemption.

But by then their American fame had withered on the vine – again shot down by Mercury's hubris, pushing the band into a more disco direction with the *Hot Space* album and flaunting his now outré homosexuality: the tash that just kept giving, the growing bald spot, the tongue-in-cheek that more and more came to resemble simple contempt for his audience – to the point where mainstream American rock audiences now looked to more obvious, more safe role models like Van Halen and Journey for their ass-kicks.

"It's true that to us there were no boundaries," May would later tell me. "Alongside trying to never tread the same ground twice, there was always this great challenge of how far can we push things in any direction. You want to be able to explore what's coming to you in the way of inspiration. It was a difficult compromise to find, but always worth finding once you did find it."

The News Of The World album, though, would, in time, offer up its own unique Queen legacy. When, in 2001, Queen premiered their new stage musical, giving it the title *We Will Rock You* was an inspired choice. It seemed to say: we are here not to offer up a rhapsody, or a parody, of any kind. We are to simply entertain you. To rock you. Because we are – and always will be – the champions at this sort of thing. All sense of self-mockery expunged. Even if, as May insists, it still came with a very definite wink of Freddie's mercurial eye.

Coming off the back of their current hugely successful Queen + Adam Lambert North American tour which celebrates the 40th anniversary of the News Of The World album, Queen will mark the record's anniversary later this year with the release of an elaborate collectible NOTW luxury box set housing vinyl, CD and DVD formats. It will offer a wealth of hitherto unheard and rare versions of the original album tracks, a 60-page book of mainly previously unseen photos and a brand new documentary, directed by Emmy Award-winning director Rhys Thomas, charting how NOTW finally broke Queen in North America, and featuring previously unreleased performance and backstage footage from the band's ground-breaking 1977 North America tour which up to now has remained in the vaults. In addition, Q+AL's first live concert virtual reality experience is available at www.vrtgo.com/

STUFISH x2

MR ROBOT

How Queen turned to a superstar fantasy artist for the *News Of The World* cover image.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Think of a Queen album sleeve. Chances are that, if you're not picturing Mick Rock's shadowy floating heads on *Queen II*, then you've chosen the giant, impassive steel robot murdering the line-up on 1977's *News Of The World*. Aesthetically – not to mention musically – Queen's sixth album was quite a departure.

Their previous two album sleeves – 1975's *A Night At The Opera* and 1976's *A Day At The Races* – had been exercises in classic minimalism, little more than the Mercury-designed crest and a monochrome background. For *NOTW* the jump-off came when Roger Taylor dug out an old issue of the American comic *Astounding Science Fiction* from 1953. On its cover was the now-familiar robot, but here, in its original form, it proffered a dead man in its palm, its eyes cold and blank, seemingly unable to process the crime it has just committed).

Ever ambitious, the band didn't want to simply reproduce the image, so they tracked down its creator, US fantasy artist Frank Kelly Freas, to discuss an adaptation. In the niche world of science-fiction artwork, Freas was something of a superstar too. As the first artist to win 10 Hugo Awards (dubbed the 'Oscars of sci-fi art'), he had illustrated for genre heavyweights including Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein, while his most famous work was perhaps *MAD* magazine's mischievous cover star Alfred E Neuman. Freas agreed to customise his work for *News Of The World*: the robot would now clutch the bloodied Mercury and May, while Taylor and Deacon tumble to the ground like rag dolls. Open the sleeve and you found the steel monster reaching down into a dome to pluck out members of the terrified audience. It remains a ruthless, strangely troubling image, famously terrifying *Family Guy*'s Stewie in the 2012 episode *Killer Queen* (based on creator Seth MacFarlane's own fear of the album sleeve as a child).

Queen never had a mascot in the mould of Eddie, Rosie or Snaggletooth, but affection for *News Of The World*'s metallic colossus – now referred to by Brian May simply as 'Frank' – is palpable as it makes a string of cameos on the band's current world tour. On June 23, at Arizona's Gila River Arena, first-night punters watched as it battered through a wall of screens before *We Will Rock You*, appeared on Taylor's drum skin, cupped May during a solo spot and threatened to upstage Adam Lambert as he sang *Killer Queen* from atop its silver cranium. "Still plenty of work to do to explore this new production," May tweeted, "but don't tell me we're not theatrical!"

'Frank' and the entire stage design was brought to life by Stufish, who also based the stage shape on May's custom guitar.

And the closest you'll get to owning the *NOTW* robot for yourself? Either investigate the new *Queen Monopoly* game (where it's one of the counters) or track down one of the ultra-rare 54-inch plastic models that were created to promote the album back in 1977, and still occasionally surface on eBay.

Southern Brotherhood

With high-flying connections and music that's a blend of classic rock, country and contemporary flair, **A Thousand Horses** are hoping to follow in the footsteps of southern rock royalty.

Words: **Polly Glass**

"There's, like, over a thousand songs written in Nashville every day," enthuses Bill Satcher, guitarist with A Thousand Horses. "There's a lot of really great music going on. I don't know what it is, maybe there's something in the river here…"

Indeed, since moving to America's capital of rootsy rock'n'roll this gaggle of denim, hats and hair have done their bit to contribute.

A Thousand Horses are cut from the same cloth as Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Allman Brothers, but they appeal to under-30s as well. Their 2015 single *Smoke* shot to No.1 in the US Country Airplay and Canadian *Billboard* charts, and racked up the number of YouTube hits usually reserved for pop stars. Debut album *Southernality* entered the Top Country Album chart at No.3, with tracks such as the lovable singalong *This Ain't No Drunk Dial* and *First Time* bringing gloriously old-fashioned tropes of girls and whiskey to youths and old-timers alike.

As Satcher and singer/guitarist Michael Hobby tell us, their new album *Bridges* was written largely on the road, which has been their main home for the last two years. It builds on their blend of classic southern rock and contemporary flair, and brings a layer of matured depth.

"I think as a whole it's like a reflection," Satcher says. "Each song is definitely like a snapshot of our lives. And sonically we were trying to experiment. We know what we do well, but we still wanted to move forward as a band. We love these songs, they're some of the best we've written so far."

The band have been enamoured with the whole creative process since the beginning, and Hobby doesn't see this changing any time soon.

"When I got my first guitar I fell in love with it totally," he says. "I fell in love with writing songs, coming up with ideas, making shit up… I was going to concerts all the time, seeing bands, and you'd go home and practise, feeling inspired. That kind of never stopped."

To fully understand A Thousand Horses you have to go back to Newberry, South Carolina, where Hobby and Satcher met as 14-year-olds in the local music shop. This small town in the heart of the southern Bible Belt might not have the musical kudos of country capital Nashville, but it quietly holds its own.

"Newberry is a very small town but it has an incredible music scene," Satcher enthuses. "The guy that owned the music store had multiple open-mic nights a week, there was music in bars and coffee shops around town, around the little downtown square… and on Friday night there was this jam in the square where everybody would sit outside and go round and play songs."

"And there was an opera house, a small theatre which seats four hundred people," adds Hobby. "We were able to see people like The Temptations coming through every year. So it was a big help. That and getting out and performing at a very young age."

The two friends made their live debut together in a local 'battle of the bands' competition, where they came first and won a thousand dollars (not horses… sorry).

"It was the first set of songs that we ever wrote," Hobby remembers. "We went through every round and ended up winning the whole thing, and the local rock radio station played it. It was great, it was a really good thing for us."

It also helped that they'd grown up in music-loving families. For Hobby, who was raised on a farm out in the sticks, a mile or so from a large Baptist church ("You put on your Sunday best, you were there every Sunday no matter what"), it was his elder brothers' rock, country and hip-hop records that set his musical tastes in motion. His second-cousins, Chris and Rich Robinson, of Black Crowes fame, were an influence as well.

"When I was younger I'd go to Black Crowes

shows all the time, that was really cool," Hobby recalls. "And then the older we got we'd jam together."

Their relationship grew as A Thousand Horses came into being; Crowes-esque qualities continue to feed into their songs, and Rich Robinson even co-wrote the track *Sunday Morning* for the Horses' debut album.

"We set up in a church in Nashville that had been converted into a recording studio," Satcher explains, "and we just went in there for three days and jammed and sat around and talked about lyrical ideas, and came up with *Sunday Morning*."

Satcher, meanwhile, grew up in a house full of Beatles records and Led Zeppelin and other classic rock staples, as well as a healthy dose of records by singer-songwriters such as James Taylor and Joni Mitchell.

"I've always loved bands," he says simply. "I've been listening to The Beatles since before I can remember. And my dad was a huge music fan. He never played or anything, but we always had a ton of albums in the house of all kinds of genres. But I've always been drawn to bands, so when I started playing guitar that's what I wanted to do. It looked like fun."

Ultimately, however, Newberry had its limits. In 2005, Satcher and Hobby, straight out of high school, moved to Nashville, and there Satcher's cousin Graham DeLoach joined them on bass, followed by Zach Brown (not Zac Brown) on guitar. By 2010 they were officially a band, with this core foursome taking on the bulk of hard touring, joined gradually over the years by the ensemble – backing singers, a drummer, fiddle and keyboard players – that we've seen on stage. Lengthy, earlier runs when they slept in vans and strangers' houses because they couldn't afford hotel rooms were all part of the ride.

> **"I fell in love with writing songs, coming up with ideas, making shit up."**
>
> **Michael Hobby**

"We toured with Blackberry Smoke, we did a run of shows with Gregg Allman which was like a dream come true…" Hobby says.

On a slightly less 'rock' but undoubtedly successful note, A Thousand Horse had a song featured in the 2011 film *Footloose*. "We went to the premiere. That was fun," Hobby remembers. "That was one of our first big breaks."

These days the four main Horses are all married, but back in those earlier days the band's house was something of a hangout for local rock upstarts.

"We had a garage, we rehearsed there, and The Cadillac Three would come over and rehearse in our house when we weren't there," Satcher remembers. "It was awesome."

They're still firm friends with The Cadillac Three – frontman Jaren Johnston and drummer Neil Mason co-wrote new song *Weekends In A Small Town* with Hobby – as well as with fellow new-generation Nashvillians the Brothers Osborne and southern compadres Blackberry Smoke. It's a thriving community, the team spirit of which seems to streamline into ATH's shows – joyous nights of southern charisma and infectious tunes.

"Nashville's a songwriters' town, y'know," Satcher says in agreement, "there's a great songwriting community there. But there's also a lot of incredible young artists and writers. It's a really exciting town to be a part of, seeing art being created around you every day."

"It's the power of it [live music]," Hobby enthuses. "It can inspire you no matter what stage you're at in your life."

Bridges is out now via Big Machine Label Group.

Crisis? What Crisis?

In August 1975, **Led Zeppelin** were about to begin rehearsals for another huge US tour. Then disaster struck, their very existence in a mangled heap. Yet out of the wreckage climbed *Presence*, an album that Jimmy Page rates as one of their best.

Words: **Mick Wall**

Monday, August 4, 1975: another sweltering hot afternoon on the small Greek island of Rhodes. Maureen Plant, wife of Led Zeppelin singer Robert, is at the wheel of a rented Austin Mini, Robert beside her in the passenger seat, their three-year-old son Karac and six-year-old daughter Carmen in the back seat, along with their friend Scarlet, the four-year-old daughter of Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page.

Two months earlier, following Zeppelin's record-breaking five-night run at the 17,000-capacity Earls Court arena in London, the young Plant family had set off for Agadir, in Morocco. Three weeks later they were in Marrakech where Page and his wife Charlotte and daughter Scarlet flew out to meet them. Together they took in a local festival "that gave us a little peep into the colour of Moroccan music and the music of the hill tribes", said Plant.

From there they journeyed thousands of miles by Range Rover through the Spanish Sahara just as the Spanish-Moroccan war was breaking out. "There was a distinct possibility that we could have got very, very lost, going round in circles and taking ages to get out," said Plant. "It's such a vast country, with no landmarks and no people apart from the odd tent and a camel."

A month later, driving up through Casablanca and Tangier, they arrived in Switzerland for a meeting with Zeppelin manager Peter Grant at his lavish new base, renting promoter Claude Knobs's house in Montreaux, and to spend a few days hanging out at the Montreux jazz festival, then in full swing. But by the end of July, Plant was getting itchy feet again, "pining for the sun [and] the happy, haphazard way of life that goes with it".

It was then that the idea of driving down to Rhodes came up. Plant arranged to meet Pretty Things vocalist Phil May and his wife, Electra, who had rented a house on the island from Roger Waters of Pink Floyd. Page, Charlotte and Scarlet followed in a second car, with Maureen's sister Shirley and her husband. On August 3, Jimmy left the party briefly to fly to Sicily to visit Aleister Crowley's old Abbey of Thelema, which occult filmmaker Kenneth Anger had told him so much about and that he was now considering buying. The plan was to all meet up again in Paris a couple of days later where they would begin rehearsals for Zeppelin's next US tour, scheduled to ▷

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Ready to rock and roll: (l-r) Page, Bonham, Plant & Jones.

Robert Plant, Jimmy Page and Peter Grant attending the premiere for *The Song Remains The Same* in London on November 4, 1976.

begin with two shows, already sold-out, on August 23 and 24 at the 90,000-capacity Oakland Coliseum in San Francisco.

Their most recent US tour had only ended in March, but with combined album sales and tour receipts estimated to have topped $40 million (more than $185m in today's money) they were keen to keep momentum flowing. There was also the fact that they were now obliged to become tax exiles, unable to return to the UK for more than 30 days until April 1976. Most of the ensuing period would be taken up touring the world, it was decided, affording the band unusual opportunities to travel to territories they had never been able to before – South America was seriously discussed, as was India, Africa and other previously thought out-of-the-way stops on the rock'n'roll map.

This was Led Zeppelin at the very top of the mountain, able to look down on nearest rivals such as the Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd from a considerable height. Unstoppable, unbreachable, invulnerable, nothing could go wrong. Until suddenly it did. And nothing would ever be the same again.

Afterwards, nobody who was there could remember exactly what happened or why. Just that the car Maureen Plant was driving skidded and spun off the road, nose-diving over a precipice and into a tree. When Robert had landed on top of Maureen, the impact shattered his right ankle and elbow and snapped several bones in his right leg. Looking at Maureen, who was bleeding and unconscious, he thought she was dead. The children were screaming in the back. Fortunately, Charlotte and Shirley, in the next car, were there to summon help, but it was still several hours before the family could be taken – on the back of a nearby fruit farmer's flatbed truck – to the local hospital. There it was discovered that Maureen had suffered a fractured skull and broken her pelvis and her leg. Karac had also broken a leg, while Carmen had broken her wrist. Scarlet was the only one to escape with just a few cuts and bruises.

> **"This could be the end of Led Zeppelin. This might be the end of the line."**
>
> **Peter Grant, following Plant's car crash**

Maureen had lost a lot of blood, and because she had a rare type could only take Shirley's blood for immediate transfusion. The process was painfully slow, with only one doctor on duty at the cockroach-ridden Greek hospital.

That night a hysterical Charlotte phoned Zep tour manager and all-round fixer Richard Cole in London, begging him to do something to get everyone home. Cole flew into action, furiously phoning round until he had co-opted two senior physicians – Dr John Baretta, a Harley Street specialist who also acted as medical consultant for the Greek Embassy and spoke fluent Greek, and Dr Mike Lawrence, a prominent orthopaedic surgeon – into journeying with him immediately to Greece.

It was still 48 hours before they arrived, though, and even then hospital officials refused to release the patients until a police investigation – searching for causes of the crash, specifically drugs – was completed, which might have taken weeks.

Again Cole saved the day. He hired a private ambulance and arranged for two station wagons to be parked at a side entrance, and wheeled Robert, Maureen and the children – their IV bottles swinging besides them – down to the getaway cars in the dead of night. Hours later they were in the sky heading back to London.

Their return home was delayed still further, however, this time, unbelievably, on the instructions of Zeppelin's own record label's accountants, who insisted Cole delay the plane's landing by 30 minutes so as to avoid using up a precious day of Plant's allotted tax-free time in the UK. Circling at 15,000 feet, Cole reflected that while it may have saved Plant thousands of pounds in taxes, "I still thought it was more important to save a life".

When the plane finally touched down, the Plants were transported via waiting ambulances to Guy's Hospital, where Maureen underwent immediate surgery. It would be several more weeks before she was well enough to leave. Robert, who was placed in a cast that ran from his hip to his toes, also faced sobering news from the doctors. "You probably won't walk again for six months, maybe more," he was told. "And there's no guarantee that you'll ever recover completely."

It was debatable who took the news worst – Plant or Grant. "This could be the end of Led Zeppelin," Grant complained to Cole. "This might be the end of the line."

Jimmy Page was also devastated by the news. "I was shattered," he said. He had "always felt", though, "that no matter what happened, provided he could still play and sing, and even if we could only make albums, that we'd go on forever". Robert's fate, Jimmy had no doubt, was tied inextricably to that of the band. "Just really because the whole aspect of what's going to come round the corner as far as writing goes is the dark element, the mysterious element. You just don't know what's coming. So many good things have come out of that, that it would be criminal to interrupt a sort of alchemical process like that." He added: "There's a lot of important work to be done yet."

To make matters worse, to preserve his new tax-exiled status Plant would have to be moved out of the country again while his wife was still recuperating in hospital. Temporary accommodation was arranged for him on the island of Jersey (exempt from punitive British tax laws) at the mansion home of millionaire lawyer Dick Christian, who sent a limousine and an ambulance to meet Plant and his mini-entourage of Cole, Zeppelin soundman Benji Le Fevre and band PA Marilyn. Christian kindly offered his guest the use of his Maserati and Jensen Interceptor cars, but a wheelchair-bound Plant would spend the next six weeks moping around the guest house, drinking beer and knocking back prescription painkillers. Occasionally he played the piano, but mainly he just sat and stared, his mood desperate. "I just don't know whether I'm ever going to be the same on stage again," he told Cole repeatedly.

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Eventually it was decided that work was the best therapy. "The longer we wait," Page complained to Cole, "the harder it's gonna be to come back." With the band's ambitious touring plans put on indefinite hold, it was decided to get to work on the next Zeppelin album. By the end of September, Plant, his wheelchair and his crutches were being boarded onto a British Airways flight to Los Angeles, where Page was waiting for him in a rented beach house in Malibu Colony. As with their stay at Bron-Yr-Aur five years before which produced the nucleus of the *Led Zeppelin III* album, the two planned to write together. There were no peaceful, flower-strewn valleys to enjoy this time, though, just the lights of old LA beckoning them onto the rocks.

Robert's mood was still predominantly black but, hanging out with Jimmy, writing again, he now had good days as well as bad, taking short, therapeutic strolls along the beach with his new cane, before collapsing back into his wheelchair. There were also trips see Donovan perform at the Santa Monica Civic, and a catch-up with Paul Rodgers and Boz Burrell from Bad Company.

Jimmy also checked out his friend Michael Des Barres's band Detective, offering them a deal with Zep's label Swan Song. However, there was another factor about Plant's Californian rehabilitation that wasn't discussed: the plentiful supply of cocaine and heroin that Page's presence anywhere now demanded. Also staying at the Malibu house was Benji Le Fevre, who told Cole they'd nicknamed the place "Henry Hall" – slang for heroin.

Having used up their backlog of material on *Physical Graffiti*, with the exception of the riff to the unreleased *Walter's Walk*, which Page now reused to create *Hots On For Nowhere*, songs for the new album would have to be built from the ground up. One of the first to take shape was *Achilles Last Stand*, the lengthy opus that would eventually open the next album. Built on the sort of strident, all-hands-on-deck guitar figure that Iron Maiden would later build a whole career out of – Page attempting to create something, he said, that reflected "the façade of a gothic building with layers of tracery and statues" – *Achilles Last Stand* also featured the first of a string of intensely autobiographical lyrics Plant now felt compelled to write.

Originally nicknamed *The Wheelchair Song*, the subject in this instance was the enforced exile which had forced the band to become what Page later described as "technological gypsies", and led indirectly, Plant seemed to suggest, to their current malaise – '*the devil's in his hole*!' he wailed balefully. Page later described his guitar solo as "in the same tradition as the solo from *Stairway To Heaven*". In truth, few would now agree but, "It is on that level to me," he insisted.

Musically, *Tea For One*, the equally lengthy blues showcase that would close the album "was us looking back at *Since I've Been Loving You*," Page would later tell me, "being in a very lonely space at the time and… you know… reflecting accordingly".

Lyrically, it found Plant metaphorically wringing his hands, the loneliness of his separation from his wife and children – Maureen being still too ill to travel – juxtaposed against the artificial luxury of his drug-fuelled life in Malibu. "I was just sitting in that wheelchair and getting morose," he recalled. "It was like… is this rock'n'roll thing really anything at all?"

But that was as nothing compared to the venom he summoned up in *For Your Life* and *Hots On For Nowhere*: the former a vicious attack on the LA lifestyle he'd once eulogised, railing against '*cocaine, cocaine, cocaine*' in the '*city of the damned*'; in the latter he directs his anger this time towards both Page and Grant, and their insensitivity to his situation, only concerned for their own futures, as he spits: '*I've got friends who would give me fuck all…*' Seemingly oblivious to Plant's ire, Page inadvertently colludes in the song's bitter denouement, using the tremolo arm on a Fender Strat he'd borrowed from former Byrd Gene Parsons, to produce a resounding twang in the middle of his solo.

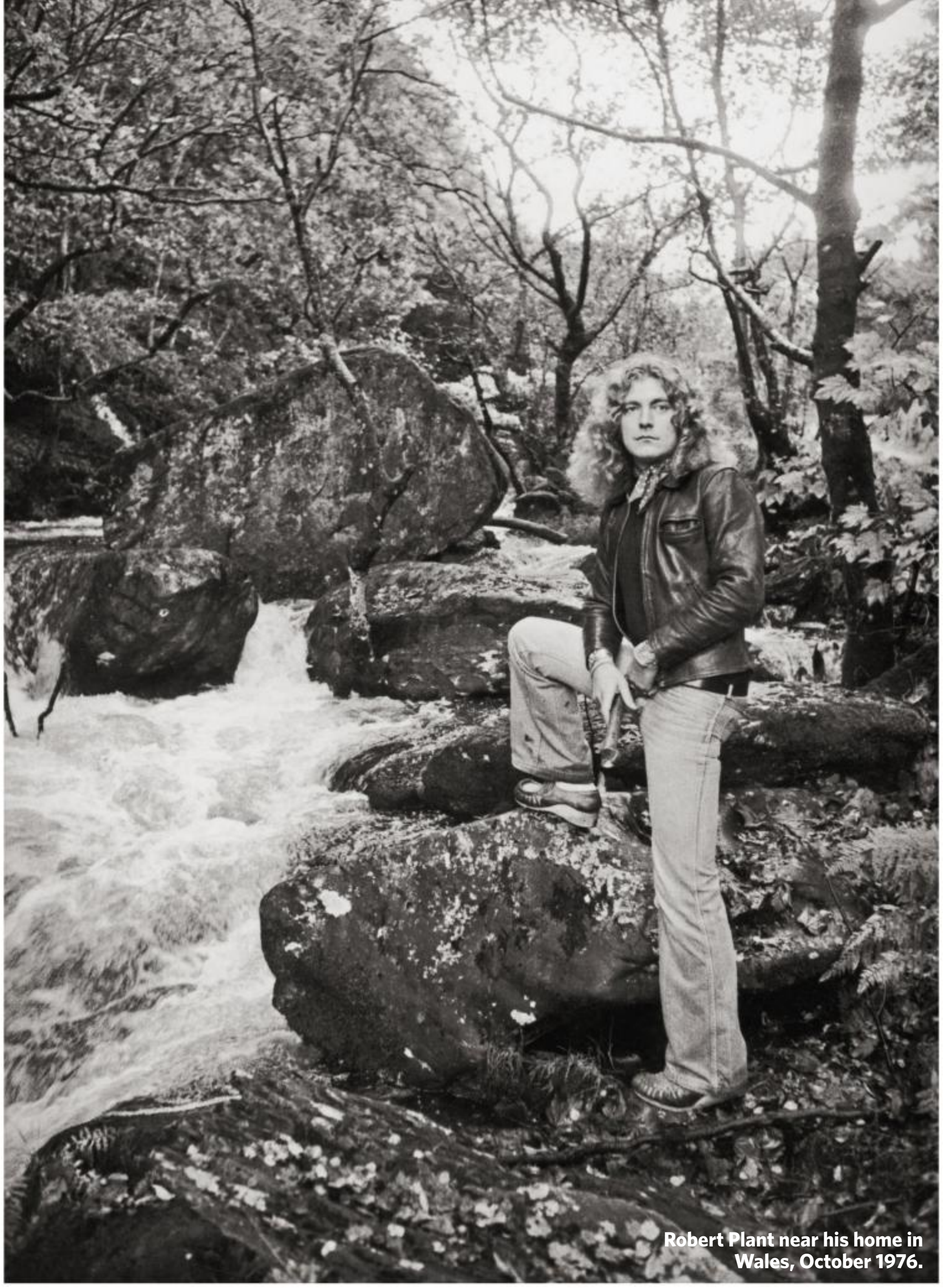
"The main memory of [recording *Presence*] is pushing Robert around in the wheelchair."

John Paul Jones

Naturally, there was also the by now almost obligatory pillaging of the blues, this time for a new cornerstone Zeppelin moment, another Blind Willie Johnson classic from 1928 called *It's Nobody's Fault But Mine*, here shortened to *Nobody's Fault But Mine*. Originally the story of Johnson fretting because his blindness prevented him from reading his bible, thereby incurring the wrath of God, it became a useful metaphor for Zeppelin's own fiery descent from heaven, Plant adapting the lyrics to include some revealingly stuttering lines about having '*a monkey on my back*' embellished by some suitably squalling harmonica. As usual, the only truly original parts were the strafing guitar lines Page concocted to which John Bonham added his most mercilessly cannon-like drum pummelling since *When The Levee Breaks*.

It wasn't all bleak. *Candy Store Rock* – its genesis traceable back to live performances of *Over The Hills And Far Away* where Page, Jones and Bonham would frequently drift off into a similarly paced improvisation – was a jolly enough romp, with Page making a rare recorded return to his rockabilly roots, and Plant cheerfully following suit, "being Ral Donner", as he put it, "the guy who wanted to be Elvis".

Royal Orleans – named after the hotel at 621 St Louis Street where Jones had had an unfortunate accidental encounter with a drag queen on the '73 US tour – was another deliberate attempt to lighten the mood, its pleasingly staccato rhythms enlivened by the jokey lyric: '*When the sun peaked through… he kissed the whiskers, left and right,*' and a jokey reference to talking '*like Barry White…*' ▷


Robert Plant near his home in Wales, October 1976.

GETTY

All's well... Page and Bonham on stage at Madison Square Garden in June '77.

Calm before the storm. Plant at home in '74.

With most of the material finished by the time Jones and Bonham arrived at the end of the month, time originally booked at SIR Studios in Hollywood for writing and rehearsal was used mainly to finesse what Page and Plant had already come up with. Work described by Page as "gruelling" because, he said, "nobody else really came up with song ideas. It was really up to me to come up with all the riffs, which is probably why [the songs were] guitar-heavy. But I don't blame anybody. We were all kind of down."

In fact neither Jones nor Bonham were given a chance to participate. As Jones told Zep historian Dave Lewis in 2003: "It became apparent that Robert and I seemed to keep a different time sequence to Jimmy. We just couldn't find him." Jones added that he "drove into SIR Studios every night and waited and waited… I learned all about baseball during that period, as the World Series was on and there was not much else to do but watch it." Even when recording for the album had begun, "I just sort of went along with it all", he shrugged. "The main memory of that album is pushing Robert around in the wheelchair from beer stand to beer stand. We had a laugh, I suppose, but I didn't enjoy the sessions, really. I just tagged along with that one."

Hence the solitary co-writing credit Jones and Bonham receives on the album, for *Royal Orleans*. Even when Jones did manage to contribute some solid ideas – such as the bass line he created with his distinctive Alembic eight-string for *Achilles Last Stand* and which he describes now as "an integral part of the song" – it went unacknowledged. "What one put into the track wasn't always reflected in the credits," he observed dryly.

It's clear that *Presence* was not one of Jones's favourite Zeppelin albums. In truth it would rarely become anybody's favourite Zeppelin album – except for Page, who still stubbornly rates it one of their best. As Dave Lewis says now: "It was the first album all over again, with Jimmy in total control of everything and hardly anyone else getting a say. That's why there was no *Boogie With Stu* or *Hats Off To Harper* on that album, no Mellotrons, acoustic guitars or keyboards of any kind – no Jonesy! It was all Jimmy. No one else really got a look in."

"Against the odds... we were still able to look the devil in the eye and say: 'We're as strong as you and stronger.'"

Robert Plant

One person blissfully unconcerned with the niceties of songwriting at this point was John Bonham, whose enforced year away from home was beginning to have the anticipated effects. One night during the SIR sessions, he arrived at the Rainbow bar & grill, Zep's favoured haunt on Sunset Strip, where he sat at the bar and ordered 20 black Russians (vodka and coffee liqueur), and polished off half of them in one go. Swivelling on his seat, he spotted a familiar face, Michelle Myer, long-time associate of producer and LA socialite Kim Fowley. Myer, sitting eating dinner, looked over and smiled. Bonzo did not smile back. Instead he went over and punched her in the face, knocking her off her seat. "Don't ever look at me that way again!" he roared.

At the end of October, when the band finally left LA – Jimmy insisting they move at once, after an unusually thunderous storm which erupted over the Malibu coastline, which he took as a bad omen – they flew to Munich, where Musicland studios had been booked for them to complete the album. On the flight, Bonzo knocked himself out on several large G&Ts, a couple of bottles of white wine and champagne, causing so much disruption that the other First Class passengers begged the steward not to wake him when the food was served. When he came to a couple of hours later he had pissed himself. He shouted for Mick Hinton, his personal roadie, and forced him to stand in front of him while he changed his pants. Then he made Hinton sit in his urine-drenched seat while Bonzo took Hinton's seat in Economy.

Situated in the basement of the Arabella Hotel, Musicland was bright and modern, sparsely furnished, the accent firmly on the functional. The Rolling Stones were due in straight after Zeppelin. So tight was the scheduling squeeze that Zep had just 18 days to work in. No Zeppelin album since their first, seven years before, had been recorded so quickly, but Page was determined to make it work.

In the event, he would find himself calling Jagger, begging for more time. It was a request the Stones' mainman was happy to acquiesce to – up to a point. He could let Jimmy have three extra days, he said. Hardly any time at all in recording terms, but it was all Page needed to finish the job, laying down all his guitar overdubs in a frantic 14-hour session, including at least six for *Achilles Last Stand*, quitting only when his fingers ached so much he could no longer manipulate them properly.

Outside, Munich was in the grips of a bitterly cold winter; inside the studio it was permanent midnight, Jimmy staying up for three days at a time, then sleeping on the floor of the studio.

"The band did the basic tracks and then went away," he recalled, "leaving me and [engineer] Keith Harwood to do all the overdubs. We had a deal between us: whoever woke up first woke up the other one and we'd continue the studio work."

As a result, Page remains inordinately proud of what at the time he initially referred to as simply "the Munich LP", its final title undecided until the cover had been finalised.

"It was a very, very intense album," he would recall, "Robert had had the accident, and we didn't know how he was gonna heal. He was on crutches, and singing from a wheelchair." Or as Plant said at the time, it was "our stand against everything. Against the elements and chance…"

Only once during the Munich sessions did the weird momentum Page had created threaten to unravel, which was when Plant, still in plaster, pulled himself up from his wheelchair one afternoon to stretch, lost his balance and fell onto

GETTY x2

his bad leg, and a horrifyingly loud cracking sound filled the room.

"Fuck!" he screamed. "Not again! Not again!" First to reach him was Page, petrified that Plant had broken his leg again. "I'd never known Jimmy to move so quickly," Robert later recalled laughingly. "He was out of the mixing booth and holding me up, fragile as he might be, within a second. He became quite Germanic in his organisation of things, and instantly I was rushed off to hospital again in case I'd reopened the fracture."

So worried was Page, in fact, that no more work could be done that day. Fortunately, after a call later that night confirming no further injury, Jimmy was back in the studio, putting in another all-nighter.

The album was finally finished on November 27, the day before Thanksgiving in America that year. The following morning, while Page was still sleeping, a delighted – and relieved – Plant put a call to the Swan Song office in New York to give them the good news, even suggesting they call the album Thanksgiving.

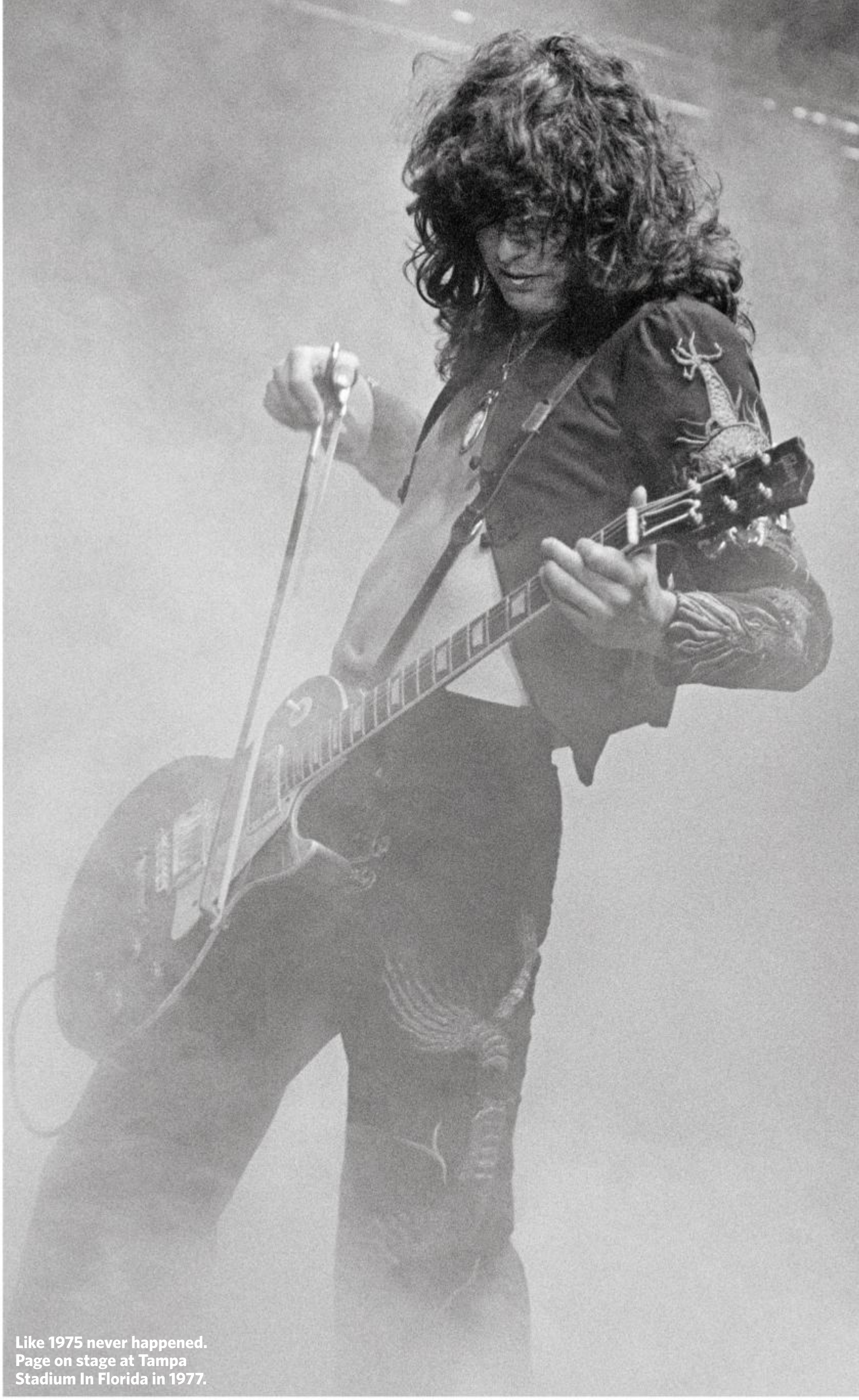
A week later the entire band were back in Jersey, where, on December 3, Bonham and Jones made an impromptu appearance on stage with Norman Hale, resident pianist at local watering hole Behan's Park West and a former member of 60s chart toppers The Tornados. A week later the whole band joined Hale for a surprise 45-minute set at the club, where fewer than 300 people watched the band tear through their "Eddie Cochran and Little Richard repertoire", as Plant put it. "I was sitting on a stool, and every time I hit a high note I stood up but not putting any weight on my foot." By the end of the set, Plant was "wiggling the stool past the drums and further out. Once we got going we didn't want to stop."

In Paris three weeks later, celebrating New Year's Day, Plant took his first steps unaided since the crash five months before. "One small step for man," he joked, "one giant leap for six nights at Madison Square Garden…"

In January 1976 the whole band were in New York, staying at the Park Lane Hotel on Central Park South. While Page began tinkering again with the mix of the live soundtrack to the long-delayed "road movie" which would later become *The Song Remains The Same*, Plant was hitting the town in the company of Benji Le Fevre and an English bodyguard called David. Although the plaster cast had now been removed, he still walked with a cane or crutch.

Less conspicuously but more worryingly, Bonzo was also intent on getting the most out of his enforced stay in the city. When Deep Purple arrived in town for a show at Nassau Coliseum, a drunken Bonzo walked on stage in the middle of their set, grabbed a free mic and announced: "My name is John Bonham of Led Zeppelin, and I just wanna tell ya that we got a new album comin' out called *Presence* and that it's fucking great!" Then he turned to Deep Purple's guitarist and said: "And as far as Tommy Bolin is concerned, he can't play for shit…"

The album's eventual title, *Presence* – irritatingly revealed ahead of time by Bonzo – was inspired by the sleeve it came in, a typically incongruous Hipgnosis creation, from an idea Storm Thorgerson, Aubrey Powell and friends Peter Christopherson and George Hardie (who had worked on the first Zeppelin sleeve) were already tinkering with. Reminiscent of the sleeve the same



Like 1975 never happened. Page on stage at Tampa Stadium In Florida in 1977.

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team had come up with the year before for Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* (which included images of two suited businessmen shaking hands, one of them on fire, a swimmer front-crawling through sand and others of an ilk), the front of *Presence* was a photograph of a 'normal' family (mum, dad and 2.2 children) seated at a restaurant table. Positioned at the centre of the white tablecloth is not a candle, as might be expected, or some floral arrangement, perhaps, but a twisted black oblong shape mounted on a plinth, dubbed 'The Object' by Hardie and co.

In the background to this central image, shot in a studio in Bow Street, London, are photographs from that year's Earls Court Boat Show. The rest of the gatefold sleeve includes similarly contrived images: on the back of the outer-sleeve, a schoolgirl (modelled by Samantha Giles, previously one of the children on the *Houses Of The Holy* sleeve) is seen with her teacher and another pupil at a desk on which stands another image of The Object. Eight more similarly enigmatic images (many taken from the archives of *Life* and *Look* magazines) furnish the inner sleeve, while the inner sleeve containing the vinyl carried unvarnished images of The Object on its own.

Later copyrighted by Swan Song, the object in question was a 12-inch black obelisk, designed

by Hardie as "a black hole" then completed by model maker Crispin Mellor. It was nicknamed "the present", says Hardie, as "a play on the fact that the actual object – a hole, in fact – wasn't present at all, but absent."

Storm Thorgerson recalled "contaminating" the deliberately dated images with what he describes as "the black obsessional object", which he maintained "stands as being as powerful as one's imagination cares it to be… We felt Zeppelin could rightfully feel the same way about themselves in the world of rock music."

According to Page "they came up with 'the object' and wanted to call [the album] *Obelisk*. I held out for *Presence*. You think about more than just a symbol that way." And of course, the acknowledgement of a 'presence' had more occult resonance than a mere 'object'. And unlike their previous two albums, this time they did allow the band's name and the album title to appear on the sleeve, albeit embossed on the white sleeve, similar to The Beatles' White Album. (The original UK shipment of *Presence* added a shrink-wrapped outer package with title and band name in black with a red underlined border. In the US the shrink-wrap also included a track-listing.)

To launch the album, Swan Song had 1,000 copies of the obelisk made which they planned to place simultaneously outside a wide range of iconic buildings across the globe, including the White House, the Houses Of Parliament and 10 Downing Street. The idea was not dissimilar to how, a year later, Pink Floyd would launch their *Animals* album by floating a giant pig over London's Battersea Power Station. But the idea was cancelled when *Sounds* magazine got wind of it and leaked the news. Instead, models of The Object were eventually gifted to various favoured journalists, DJs and other media people, and are now highly collectable artefacts.

When *Presence* was released on March 31, 1976 it was another instant No.1 hit, going gold in the UK (platinum in the US) on advance sales alone, and becoming the fastest-selling album in the Atlantic Records group's history. Reviews were generally good too. John Ingham, in *Sounds*, called it "unadulterated rock and roll" and described *Achilles Last Stand* as the song to "succeed *Stairway To Heaven*", while Stephen Davis, in *Rolling Stone*, said it confirmed Zeppelin as "heavy-metal champions of the known universe". He add the caveat: "Give an Englishman 50,000 watts, a chartered jet, a little cocaine and some groupies and he thinks he's a god. It's getting to be an old story…" – a more piercingly accurate comment than even the writer probably knew.

But sales soon tailed off, just as they had for *Led Zeppelin III* and *Houses Of The Holy*, initial excitement failing to translate into wider general interest among non-partisan record buyers as what was – correctly – perceived as the album's generally depressing ambience became known.

Undeterred, Page and Grant dismissed the lack of a strong following wind for sales of the album as a side effect of the band's inability to promote it with a world tour. But the fact is that *Presence* remains one of Zeppelin's least satisfying musical confections; the story behind it of more lasting interest than the often rather turgid music that resulted, despite the fact that both Page and Plant regarded it as a personal triumph.

"Against the odds, sitting in a fucking chair, pushed everywhere for months and months, we were still able to look the devil in the eye and say: 'We're as strong as you and stronger, and we should not only write, we should record,'" Plant told a reporter from *Creem*. "I took a very good, close scrutiny of myself, and transcended the death vibe, and now I'm here again, and it's mad city again."

Page's affection for *Presence* was more to do with fond reminiscences of the nights he spent alone, with just recording engineer Keith Harwood for company, doodling away to his stoned heart's desire, than with the end product in itself.

Not that Zeppelin's overall popularity was particularly affected. Promoters, eager to tempt the band back onto the road, told Peter Grant that demand for Zeppelin tickets would be greater than ever – if and when the band decided they were able to return.

With time on their hands and interest in *Presence* flagging, plans were already in place for Led Zeppelin to make a full-on return to America the following year. When things would surely improve for the band. Wouldn't they?

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Back in the fast lane: Bonham, Plant, Page and Jones during the '77 US tour.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
JOHN LYDON

Never trust the music industry or nuns. Question everything. Religion is pollution. You don't have to hate your bandmates. These and more help shape the former Sex Pistol's world view.

Words: **Ian Fortnam**

Former Sex Pistols vocalist and current PiL focal point John Lydon – opinion-polarising iconoclast of long standing – is tucking into a liquid brunch. Resplendent in billowing pink shirt, he's perched on a Thameside balcony at Chelsea's Harbour Hotel, smoking like a lab rat and lubricating a bright and breezy discourse with a rapid succession of minibar miniatures. Bourbon follows gin, follows vodka, follows bourbon… "Wanna brandy, mate?" It's 11.45 on a Tuesday morning.

Lydon is animated (go figure) as he flicks through *Mr Rotten's Songbook*, his eye-wateringly expensive, self-illustrated compendium of lyrics. Era-defining couplets and doodles in a distinctly Milligan style persistently prompt anecdotes, fury, melancholia, laughter and acid drops of obdurate bile.

The twinkle-eyed Lydon charm is habitually tempered by indefensible Rotten controversy – he's nothing if not infuriating. And as he preaches his punk-inciting mischievous gospel, we realise why it is we can't help but love this unlikely national treasure: he's good bad, but he ain't evil.

SONGS ARE LIKE MACHINES

As I compiled *Mr Rotten's Songbook*, I remembered the original writing of each song and what was floating around in my mind when I committed the lyrics to paper. When I write I have ideas running around in my head consistently, until I hear the right tone or noise and then I write to that. That spurs me on. I love writing. I love a choice phrase to explain a situation accurately.

Accuracy is intrinsic to me. It's the heart, soul, mind, body, everything of writing. Telling a story, capturing a situation as best as you possibly can in as few words as possible. Being able to do that from my first band onwards was a real bonus. To be able to do it to music was an absolutely beautiful concept that was offered to me, and that turned into punk. I'd found the rivets that held the thing together, and that was a musical backdrop.

I always wanted to be a writer, but was never happy with words alone. I need a melody, a lilt, a sonorous or sometimes a malodorous structure in order to pin it down. I can also do that with cartoons and drawings. When we collected all my lyrics together, I looked through them and started doodling, illustrating how I remembered the situation surrounding certain songs, adding a fourth aspect of my personality to them, which is when they expanded into a book.

LYRICS SET A BAND'S AGENDA

I don't know if Malcolm [McLaren, Pistols manager] ever read the lyrics of *Anarchy In The UK* or *God Save The Queen*. I don't know if any of them did. I just did what I did. I came in with my own imagery and wrote about aspects of life that completely altered the agenda, produced shock, awe and horror in the world. But it so needed it. From my point of view, these were the institutions, organisations, governments and religions that were ruining my life up to this point – ruining all of our lives. It wasn't just my own personal point of view, it was an oppression all of us were under. We needed to break free from the shackles that were demanding blind obedience to a monarchy. Why can't you question or challenge that? Why can't you raise an issue with it? Well, I did.

I'M NOT THE SAME AS WHEN I BEGAN

By the time I formed PiL I'd written enough, in great detail and accuracy, about institutions demanding your loyalties and all of that. I felt it was time to move into personal politics because I was questioning myself: did I have a valid place in all of this? I was facing 'That's the end of him!' challenges from the media. They were out to stick their knives in my back, so I beat them to the punch [laughs]. I knew what my faults were, so all their negativity couldn't hinder my progress. That's when PiL went into self-exploration, studying emotions and what their value is. And as the years progress, so does my knowledge, and that helps the songs. Joining my first band all hinged on me wearing an 'I Hate Pink Floyd' T-shirt. Which I didn't [laughs], so irony's always been there too.

"The media were out to stick their knives in my back, so I beat them to the punch."

THERE'S STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY

The most helpful part of my entire existence were those four years of complete confusion and isolation, lost in the wilderness [Lydon suffered a near fatal bout of spinal meningitis when aged just seven, which left him with severe memory loss]. It was really the most excellent gift that God or nature could have ever given me. I had the opportunity to view myself from the outside looking in and wonder who I really was. I discovered what a personality is, and how quickly a personality can be apparently removed because of lost memories. But your personality still exists – you still know you're something, that you belong somewhere. There's still some connection to your fellow human beings. It's just what that connection is that took a long time for me to work out. But I learnt from that period, not to bother with lying and to believe everything that people tell me. But when I find out that they're lying, that's it, I'm done with them. I've gone.

NEVER TRUST A NUN

When I desperately needed to remember who I was, some wicked adults lied to me and deceived me. I was left-handed from when I was born – I'll always be left-handed. The only real physical trait that was still in existence when I came out of hospital was that I was left-handed, but the nuns that ran the primary school that I went to, the Sacred Heart on Eden Grove [Holloway], were trying to convince me: "No, you've always been right-handed." This is hindering your progress ▷

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Public Image Ltd in 1978: (l-r) Keith Levene, Jah Wobble, John Lydon.

Early Sex Pistols, in 1976: (l-r) Johnny Rotten, Paul Cook, Steve Jones, Glen Matlock.

and the most evil, spiteful thing you can do. They'd hit me with the sharp edge of a ruler, and that pain brought back the memory of being rulered the same way when I was younger. My memories were spurred on by anger, which is the energy.

RELIGION IS POLLUTION

I don't know if I ever really believed in God, but it's hemmed into you that you're guilty no matter what you do, so you always feel shy and reserved about everything. Now that's all gone, but there are moments of solitude where I can look back and remember just how painful, according to them, God can be. Organised religion is evil pollution. A parasite on our good nature that lulls us into a false sense of security and it stops us thinking for ourselves. Just like left- or right-wing politics, the modern religion.

A TRAINED VOICE IS A BLAND VOICE

You don't need to follow vocal registers or limitations or styles of singing – you need to sing how you feel. And it takes a long time to get there. This takes me back to my first band again. I had to find a singing voice, immediately.

In them early days we didn't really have monitors, so I never really heard myself until we were supporting Eddie And The Hot Rods at the 100 Club. They had monitors, and I was disgusted by what I was hearing [laughs], so a serious readjustment went on. I could never really understand why the band weren't paying particular attention to what the words were, then I realised that the vocal sound was off.

I watch *X Factor* and *American Idol*, but only the auditions. I feel genuine pain and empathy for those poor souls – full of heart – that just ain't there, and they're not there because they haven't been given the time to get there. Those shows would mean much more to me if they tried to develop someone from zero to hero, rather than letting trained singers waltz in and take over. A trained singer, to me, that's just karaoke, just technique. There's no heart and soul in it.

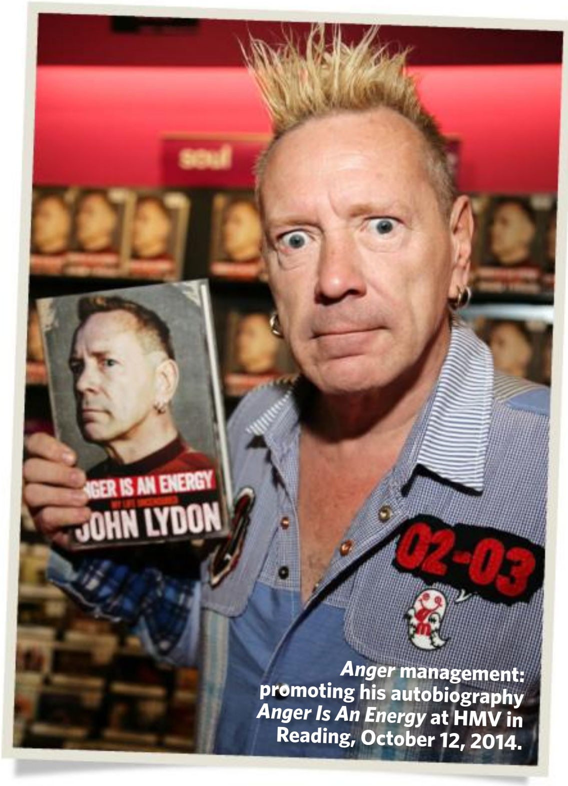
THE MUSIC BUSINESS KILLS BANDS

Large record labels poison you. Get rid of them. They mean well, but they infiltrate and tell one member a different thing to that which they tell another. Different sub-groups form, and it ends up with this kaleidoscope of catastrophe that creates poisonous agendas and jealousies. Then the commitment's gone. That's basically why Public Image has had what, forty-nine members over the years? When it comes to the crunch of making a second album, the record company have polluted all your minds against each other, everyone's viewing themselves as a superstar and fancying their own solo careers, and then on top of that the record company withdraw the purse strings. It's a bottomless pit of problems that goes on and on.

BAND MEMBERS DON'T HAVE TO HATE EACH OTHER

From my first band onward, I thought: "Well, it's adversity, isn't it?" You know, Shakespeare: smile in the face of adversity [laughs]. You're not supposed to like each other, but I knew deep down inside that wasn't the right way. It took time, but now I've realised we can raise finance on our own just by gigging, and we appreciate each other. So now, for the first time in my life, I've made two albums with the same people. It's a fantastic, heart-warming feeling. And we will, some time before the end of this year, do a third, because there's such a rich vein of ideas. Between us is a gold mine of great stuff and we're knocking little nuggets out of each other that go towards the betterment of the songs. I never thought I'd be able to deal with the comfort zone, as we call it, which is really uncomfortable [laughs], but thrilling. It's still a knife edge I'm on, just the other side of the knife.

"I could have been condemned to death. I giggled all the way through that, though."



Anger management: promoting his autobiography *Anger Is An Energy* at HMV in Reading, October 12, 2014.

NOT ALL PUBLICITY IS GOOD PUBLICITY

Never was. Some of that Sex Pistols publicity got me discussed in the Houses of Parliament under the Traitors and Treasons Act, which carried a death penalty. I could have been condemned to death. I giggled all the way through that, though. In the end, the establishment pretty much harassed me out of the country. There were endless police raids. It wouldn't stop and it became impossible to function, to do anything. You'd walk down the street – instant search. I don't need this, my band don't need this. Nobody needs this. It was ludicrous overreaction by the British establishment. They make their own demons and then they have to go to bed with those demons… And we roger them royally.

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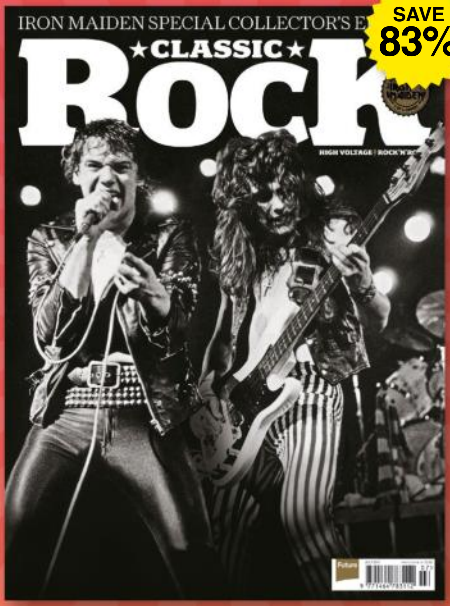

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An Englishman In NEW YORK

In an exclusive extract from his new autobiography, written with *Classic Rock*'s Paul Rees, **Mick Jones** tells the story of how he went from Reading via France to the USA, where he put together a new band called Foreigner.

By 1973, Mick Jones already lived a colourful, peripatetic musical life. Born into a middle-class household in Reading in 1944, he had grown up a music nut and was self-taught on the guitar. At the age of 18 he went off to tour France as a member of the backing band of one Dick Rivers, a typically French approximation of Elvis Presley. That gig came to an abrupt end for Jones when he made off with Rivers's fiancée, going to live with her in Paris.

He spent the next eight years in France, working as a bandleader and arranger, first for a Bardot-esque chanteuse, Sylvie Vartan, and then her husband, Johnny Hallyday, a national icon. With Hallyday, Jones got to travel the world and live the high life. He cavorted with The Beatles in Paris, and encouraged such visiting British musicians as Jimmy Page, Peter Frampton and Steve Marriott into doing sessions with Hallyday. Tiring of constantly being at Hallyday's beck and call, and wanting a new challenge, he returned to England in 1971, and soon after joined a reactivated version of psychedelic rockers Spooky Tooth.

By 1974 we found in Spooky that we were getting a better reception in the States than back home in Britain, so made a collective decision to relocate to New York.

Going off to live in the Big Apple certainly appealed to me, and I took an apartment on 34th Street on the West Side of Manhattan and right next to the Lincoln Tunnel. I was sharing the place with a pal of Gary's [Wright, keyboard player/vocalist]. Unfortunately, this so-called friend ended up making off with the money I was paying him in rent rather than handing it over to the landlord, and so we both got evicted. New York's a ruthless city. Someone came one morning and stripped the place of everything that was ours. All I was able to salvage was an armful of clothes and a couple of guitars.

Being made temporarily homeless was soon enough the least of my worries. The band had just cut a new album, *The Mirror*, with Eddie Kramer. Eddie was fresh from engineering Led Zeppelin's *Houses Of The Holy* and captured our band on a roll – only for Gary to stiff the rest of us. Before the album could be released, and out of the blue, he upped and quit Spooky to go back to his solo career. I was left high and dry in New York, and without a clue as to what my next move was going to be. I seriously considered returning to England and starting over a whole new career, such as going to medical school or becoming a dentist. The second option was the most attractive to me, because it took less time to qualify and paid good money.

> "The first day Lou Gramm joined us in the studio, I felt as if I had been hit by a bolt of lightning."

I was rescued from looking into people's mouths for a living by the offer of a job from Spooky's manager, Nigel Thomas. Nigel had set up a record label, Goodear Records, and wanted me to run it for him. He made me president of Goodear, and that also gave me the opportunity to get back into producing. We worked out of the famous old Brill Building, and Nigel even threw me a swanky apartment into the bargain. The drawback was that Nigel was also something of a bounder. He comported himself like an English gentleman, but in reality ripped people off left, right and centre, and including his artists.

In short time I found myself getting into all sorts of tight spots with Nigel. He sent me off around the world to collect money from the various deals that he had done with publishing companies, and all which got shafted in the end. At one point he determined to buy Stax Records, hook, line and sinker. In order to secure a loan for the deal, he arranged for us to have a dinner with the president of the Union Planters Bank in Memphis. When we had finished our meal, Nigel handed over his credit card to pay the bill. Of course, it bounced, and the maitre d' cut it up right there in front of the very guy that Nigel was trying to tap for millions of dollars.

Eventually I grew uncomfortable with being on the other side of the desk, and not just because of Nigel's shenanigans; I simply wasn't cut out to be a corporate executive.

Serendipitously, another band gig pretty much fell into my lap. Through working at Goodear, I had been introduced to Bud Prager, who was then managing the former Mountain guitarist, Leslie West. Mountain had not long broken up,

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Feels Like The First Time: Foreigner on location for their debut video shoot in 1977.

and Leslie was on the lookout for a second guitar player for his new solo band. Bud arranged for me to audition. Leslie loved the way that I played, so the job was mine.

The band was a power trio and also featured Mountain's ex-drummer, Corky Laing. Together the three of us wrote a bunch of songs and cut an album as the Leslie West Band. It was a good record, and we managed to play a handful of excellent shows, but things quickly deteriorated. At that point in time Leslie had a well-documented problem with heroin and it caused the band to break up. He did go into rehab, and we would hear back that he was doing great and testing clean, whereas in reality he had done a deal with a fellow patient to swap each other's urine samples every morning. One of the last shows that we did was in New York. Towards the end of our set, Leslie walked off stage and vanished from the venue. It turned out that he had taken his guitar down to a place on 48th Street and pawned it to buy drugs.

On the spot, I quit. I had, though, seen enough to know that Bud was a bright guy, so told him I was going to form my own band and asked him to be my manager. He had to borrow a hundred thousand dollars from a trust fund of his wife's to finance the deal, which I don't believe she knew a thing about until years afterwards. From that moment on, Bud and I formed a close bond. His business partner, Gary Kirfirst, also happened to be managing another of Leslie's former Mountain bandmates, bassist Felix Papallardi. Felix had established a small recording studio in their offices and I was able to use that as a writing room at first, and later for auditions and rehearsals. That place was a lifesaver for me, because I had to scrape to get by.

"Our success was down to the strength of the songs, because we didn't have an image or gimmick."

I felt as if I had been released. Quickly, I wrote four songs, one of which was *Feels Like The First Time*. I had also started to hang around with a guy named Ian Lloyd. It was only once we had gotten to know each other that I found out that Ian had been the original frontman with a New York band, The Stories. Three years earlier, they had scored a number-one hit in America with a cover of the Hot Chocolate song *Brother Louie*. That single had become a millstone around Ian's neck. In reality he was a fan of harder, more progressive English rock bands, such as Genesis, but had got stuck on what they called the chitlin circuit, playing pokey soul joints.

Ian was altogether great to me. Not only did he sing guide vocals on my new songs, he also put me in touch with some of his contacts. I had already come across a keyboard player, Al Greenwood, when Ian turned me on to a fellow Englishman, Ian McDonald. This Ian had played keyboards and flute in King Crimson and was doing session work in New York. King Crimson was a big deal at the time, so I had an immediate regard for Ian's playing and asked him to come by my adopted studio for a jam. All along I had envisaged there being a multi-instrumentalist in my band, and Ian was perfect for that role. He was the type of intuitive musician that could add different textures and colours to any kind of song.

Almost as soon as I had recruited Ian, I also encountered Dennis Elliott. I had gone off to upstate New York to do a session with Ian Hunter, and Dennis was his drummer. Once again I was instantly impressed, and spent the next couple of months trying to subtly prise Dennis away from Ian's band. He eventually succumbed, and went on to become an integral part of our band's sound.

Dennis isn't a flashy player, if anything he's slightly understated, but he has an acute sense of feel and real power. Right from the start, Dennis and I locked in so well together that we didn't need to hear a bass part. That was perhaps why bassist Ed Gagliardi was the last musician that I brought into the fold. By then I had a name for this band of mine too, which was Trigger, but no lead singer.

I had auditioned at least forty candidates for that defining role, but without success. It had got to the stage where I was considering offering the

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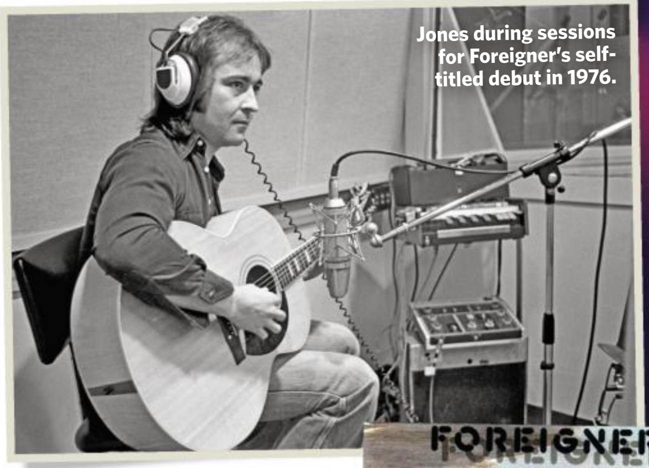
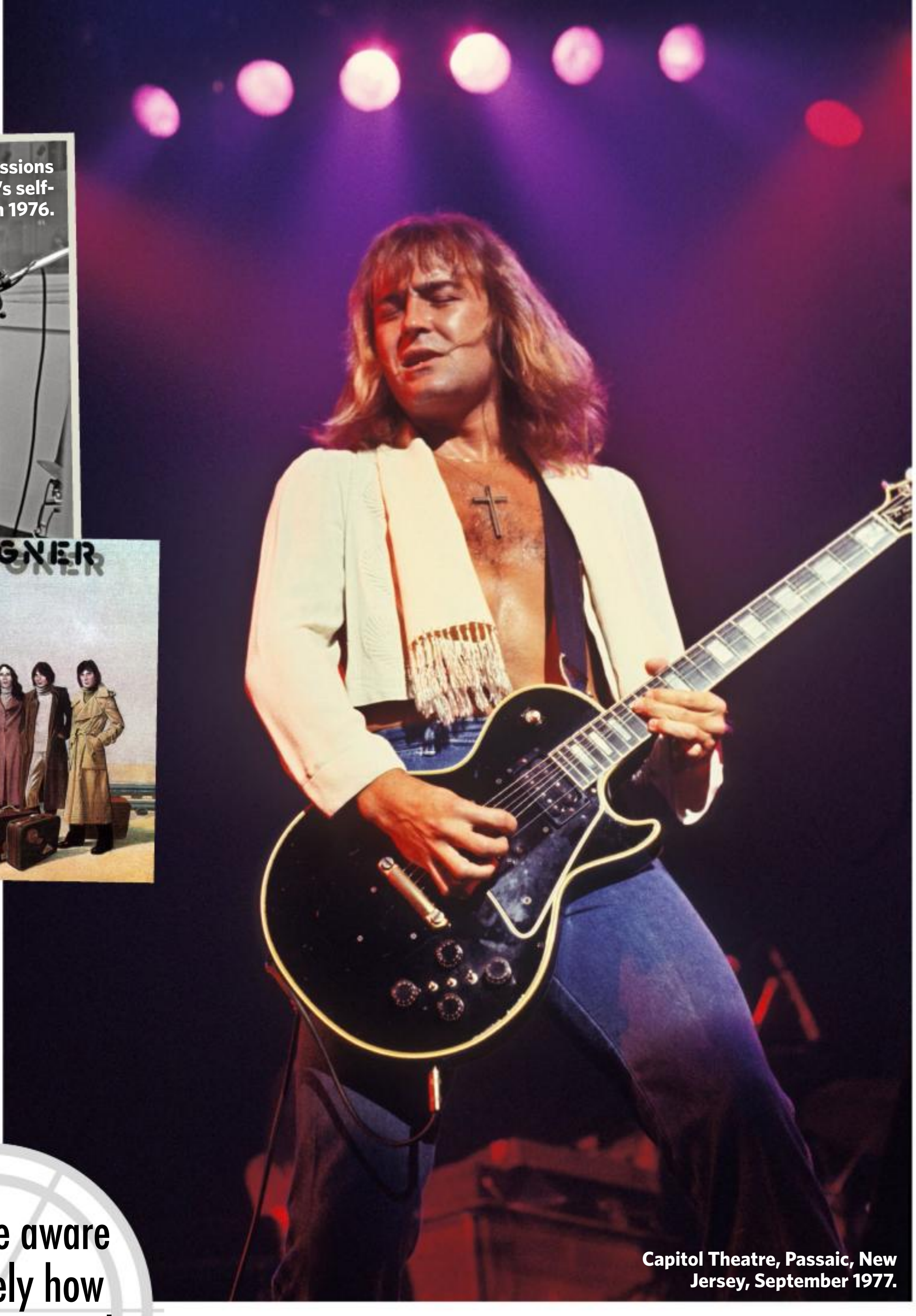


Jones during sessions for Foreigner's self-titled debut in 1976.



Capitol Theatre, Passaic, New Jersey, September 1977.

post to Ian Lloyd. That was a very close-run thing, but Ian's voice just wasn't quite right for the overall sound that I had in my head.

I had actually met Lou Gramm when I had toured America with Spooky Tooth. The guy who did our promotion work on the East Coast lived upstate in Rochester, and in his spare time managed Lou's then band, Black Sheep. He brought Lou along to one of our shows, and Lou and I chatted backstage that night. But he was playing drums at the time, and told me that he figured that was going to be his ultimate destiny.

After six more fruitless months without being able to find a singer I was almost tearing my hair out in frustration. One afternoon, I was up at the studio finishing off the backing track for the *Feels Like The First Time* demo. On the mixing desk, I had stacked a pile of records that I'd been sent. For a break and just to take my mind off the task at hand, I pulled out the Black Sheep album that my old friend from Rochester had mailed me. Within ten seconds of it hitting the turntable, I knew that I had found the voice.

"I became aware of precisely how much of a control freak I am."

The next thing I had to do was track Lou down in Rochester. I discovered that he was working on a building site and managed to get a number for him. When I called, he was carrying a load of bricks up a ladder. He came down to talk to me. He told me that he had got fed up of singing and was concentrating instead on the drums. I was gobsmacked, because he had such a fantastic voice which I knew could potentially put him right up there in the pantheon of classic rock singers. We chatted, and eventually I was able to persuade him down to New York for a few days. The song *Long Way Home* on our debut album [*Foreigner*, 1977] was subsequently written about that conversation and what came to pass. As Lou sang in the first line, I did indeed phone him on a Monday.

The first day that Lou joined us in the studio we ran through a couple of songs with him, and I felt as if I had been hit by a bolt of lightning. Right away I knew that this could be the start of something special. Lou had a feel for soul music, which was a great credential in my book, and then again this indefinable magic. He hadn't, though, ever worked with anybody that could help him to shape his voice – and with such things as phrasing, the key, and on melodies – and which I would be able to do.

With Lou on board we completed our demo tape and sent it to Jerry Moss at A&M. Jerry was one of the great record men of that era. Together with his partner Herb Albert, he had signed Humble Pie, Free, Procul Harum and Joe Cocker, and so A&M would have been a good home for us. I didn't find out until much later that Jerry had left to go on holiday the very morning that our tape arrived. That was always a big regret of mine. We had also sent it to Atlantic Records, but the head of A&R returned it to us without even taking it out of the box.

Bud had connections at Atlantic. He began making inroads towards at least getting us listened to, and then John Kalodner arrived on the scene. John would go on to sign both Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins to the label, and also to great success at Geffen and Columbia, but just then he was the new kid on the block. He had been working as a rock writer, so when he happened upon our tape and saw the line-up of the band, he was familiar with Ian and me, and to a certain extent Dennis. He thought it was fantastic, and from that moment on caused pandemonium at the label, pestering, yelling and screaming at people to listen to us. Finally our tape made its way up to Atlantic's president, Jerry Greenberg. A few weeks after that, John brought Jerry down to our studio, and within days we had been signed to Atlantic.

Not unwisely, it was also John that suggested we bin the name Trigger. I instead came up with Foreigner, to reflect the make-up of the group: three Brits and three Americans. Since we had three rookies in the ranks, I also felt I had to lead the way in all other respects, and very much took over the reins.

In fact it was during that period that I first became aware of precisely how much of a control freak I am. One of the first decisions I took unilaterally was that I wanted to have Roy Thomas Baker work with us on our first album. Roy had made his name producing Queen, but ironically was booked up on an Ian Hunter record, *Overnight Angels*. He was, though, good enough to recommend to me Gary Lyons, who had engineered for him all of the Queen stuff. In ▷

GETTY x2

Mick Jones (centre) with Ed Gagliardi (left) and Ian McDonald.

turn, Gary wanted to bring another guy over with him from England, John Sinclair.

The pair of them flew to New York to meet with me, and we all seemed to be on the same page. I was particularly interested in us getting an instantly recognisable vocal sound and of certain songs having background vocal choruses. Even though neither of Gary or John had produced a record before, Gary at least clearly knew what he was talking about, and so I rolled the dice and gave them a go. We recorded at Atlantic Studios in New York, and then Gary and John took the tapes back with them to London to do the mix. I still hadn't got a Green Card, so Ian accompanied them on the band's behalf.

When Gary subsequently had a couple of the mixes FedExed over to me, they were miles from the vision that I had for Foreigner. I immediately had all of the tapes returned to me in New York. Ian flew back to join me and together with a staff engineer from Atlantic, Jimmy Douglas, we raced to remix the album in a very short amount of time. Even still, we ran a month over our deadline and racked up costs. That would become the norm for us, but I was always determined that our records be representative of the band.

The night that I was finally able to take the completed master home with me, I had a little smoke, put it on loud and lay out on the floor to listen to it, staring up at the ceiling. That was one of the most glorious moments of my life.

Instinctively, I knew that the record was good enough to allow us to start to make a name for ourselves. But no one in their right mind could have predicted what it would go on to become. Just as soon as it came out, we were being told that it was selling up to three hundred thousand copies a week, and then four hundred thousand.

"Nothing can prepare anyone for being caught up in that kind of whirlwind."

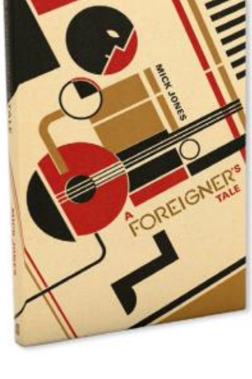
You have to remember that this was 1977; disco was the big thing in America, and punk rock was dawning, so it seemed even more unlikely that a band such as Foreigner would be able to break through.

The scale of our success was pretty much unprecedented. The only new band to have achieved anything like it was Boston, whose debut album had been a multi-platinum phenomenon the previous year. Almost no one else up to that point, including the Stones and Zeppelin, had shifted a million records straight off. The *Foreigner* album passed that mark in a mere few weeks. It had to be down to the strength of the songs, because we didn't have an image or gimmick. We raced on to two, three, four and then five million sales. The only two bands that were up there with us all of that year were the Eagles with *Hotel California* and Fleetwood Mac with *Rumours*.

My mind is full of snapshots of that time, since the whole was like a blur to me. Early on we did a bunch of shows opening up for Uriah Heep and with Ted Nugent also on the bill. Then a string of dates as support to the Doobie Brothers that helped to bring us to the attentions of a wider audience.

When the album truly took off, we started to do headline shows of our own. That was a testing experience, especially as quite often we found that AC/DC had been booked as our opening act. They had also just signed to Atlantic, and there was a faction at the label that was determined to have them break America. Having to follow them separated the men from the boys. It was the same story with Cheap Trick, who opened for us on our first arena tour of the States. They would go out every night being utterly determined to blow us off the stage, but we held our own, I think.

The whole experience was massively enjoyable, of course it was, but also hard for me to comprehend. Nothing can prepare anyone for being caught up in that kind of whirlwind. At the outset, at least, it didn't change things too much within the band. A couple of the guys made down-payments on flash cars. In general, though, what we felt most of all was an overwhelming sense of pride at what we had accomplished.



Extracted from A Foreigner's Tale by Mick Jones. Two editions of the book are available now from www.foreignerbook.com. Classic Rock readers can receive a 15% discount on the price of either edition by using the code ForCR17 at checkout.

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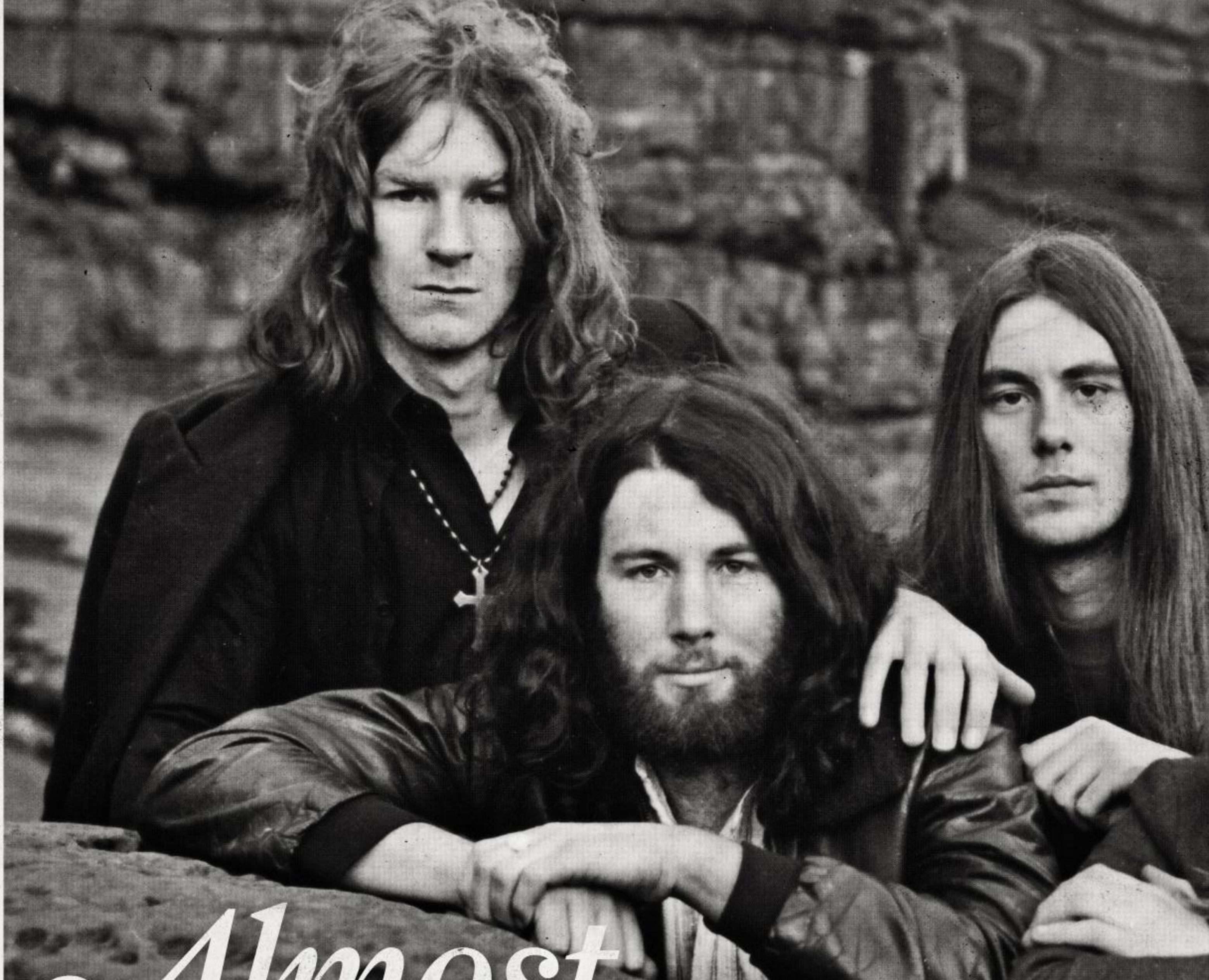


Almost FAMOUS

They had a genius guitarist, Sabbath's blessing and Tony Iommi as manager. So how did it all go so wrong for Necromandus? And why is it finally coming together some 45 years later?

Words: **Dave Everley**

Back in the day, when he was the drummer for a heavy metal band, Frank Hall was everyone's friend. And Frank has a story for every occasion. He was there back in the 70s when Ozzy Osbourne – whom he calls John, "because it's his real name" – took a shotgun to his chickens in a drunken stupor. "He'd just got back from America. I was staying at his house. I was in bed and I heard this 'bang, bang, bang'. Bloody woke me up. He set fire to some stables, too. He said they were full of rats. I don't know what gets into John."

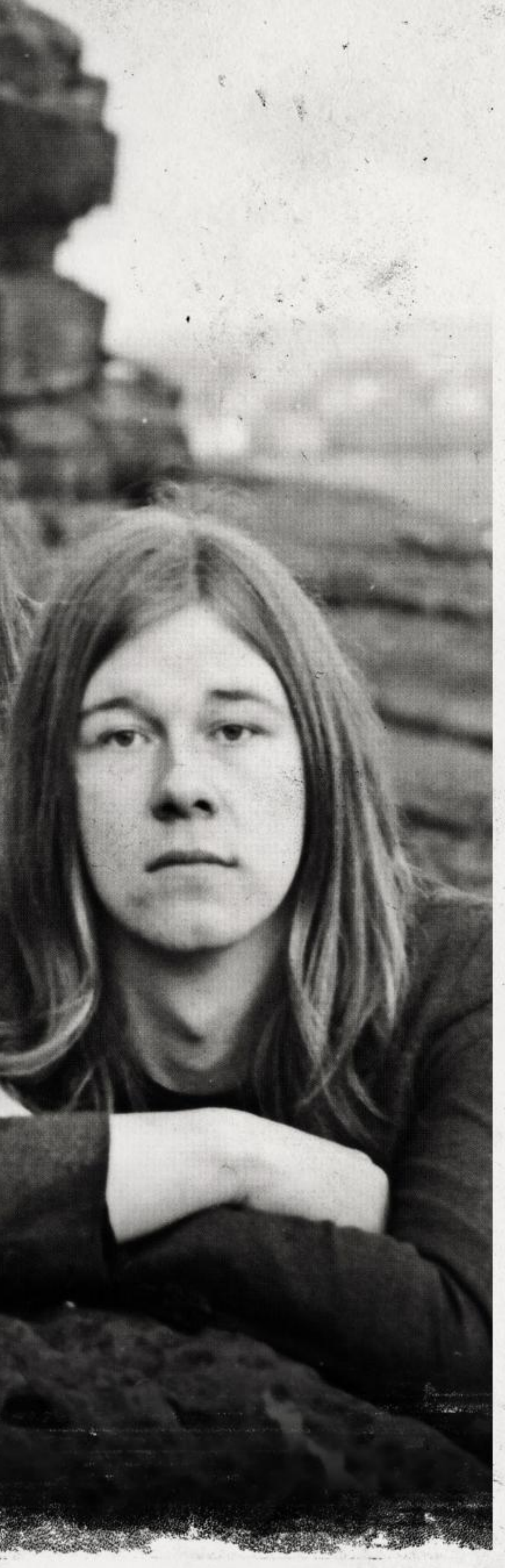
Hall was the man John Bonham gave his drum kit to. "It was a Ludwig kit with the green sparkle. I said: 'I wish I had one of those.' Next thing I know we're driving down to Bonham's farm in a Range Rover and shoving it in the back."

He mixed with Thin Lizzy ("Phil was Phil, he was always looking for the next bird"), Keith Moon ("This one time Moony was playing my drums, and I'm looking at him, thinking: 'He's terrible, he can't play"), and Kray twins associates Chris and Tony Lambrianou ("I wasn't bothered what I said around them – they knew all I wanted to be was a drummer").

Today, Hall is a healthy 60-something, and as friendly as you'd expect a man who mingled with rock stars and criminals to be. A hereditary muscle-wasting condition means he spends much of his time in a wheelchair. "Doesn't stop me drumming, though. There's no muscle in my calf, but I can play flat out for three hours solid."

But 45 years ago, Hall was on the verge of something big. His band, Necromandus, were earmarked as the next Black Sabbath – by Black Sabbath themselves. They didn't quite have it all, but they had a lot, including Tony Iommi as a manager and, in guitarist Barry Dunnery, one of the great lost six-string geniuses of heavy metal's golden age.

Except Necromandus never became famous. They never even got to release an album. Frank Hall might have a story for everyone else, but he's got his own story too: one marked by bad luck, poor timing and unfulfilled dreams. Until now.



Necromandus were part of the second wave of British heavy metal: those kids who picked up the ball from Sabbath, Cream, Zeppelin and Purple and ran with it. Their songs had a whiff of prog rock and even jazz cutting through the spliff smoke. *Melody Maker* called them "Black Sabbath playing Yes's greatest hits".

Necromandus's history is tightly bound with that of Sabbath. It was at a gig by Iommi and Bill Ward's pre-Sabbath outfit Mythology in Cockermouth that Hall saw the light. "I'd never seen anything like it. I'd never seen a left-handed guitarist before. And Bill was knocking seven bells out of John Bonham."

They stayed in touch. Mythology mutated into Earth and then into Black Sabbath, picking up Geezer Butler and Ozzy along the way. "I met John at a sound-check," says Hall of the latter. "He didn't have any shoes on, he was a right state. And he was rude. Rude and pissed. But he had stage presence."

The connection paid off. Frank watched Sabbath's star rise as he tried to get his own career off the ground. When his first band, Heaven, fell apart, he tapped up Barry Dunnery, who was making his name on the local scene with his band Jug. "I hitched to Egremont," Hall says, "knocked on Baz's door: 'Do you fancy being in a band?' He said: 'Are you any good?' I said: 'We can be.'"

They were joined by singer Bill Branch and bassist Dennis McCarten, but Dunnery was the secret weapon. He was a classic early-70s guitarist, one who could switch between heavy riffing and jazzy chops in a heartbeat. Hall recalls the band sound-checking for a gig at the Marquee. Across the room, two men stared at Barry, agog. "It was Steve Howe from Yes and the bass player, the big lad who died [Chris Squire]. Baz was doing all this Allan Holdsworth legato stuff. Steve Howe was pointing at him, going: 'How the hell is this kid doing that?'"

But there was a darker side to Dunnery. One day, in the back of the band's van, he confided to Hall: "I have this weird feeling in my head." He suffered from crippling anxiety attacks. Hall suspects they may have been a product of undiagnosed depression; mental health wasn't high on the agenda in the world of early-70s heavy metal.

"Baz always wore a big scarf," says Hall. "As soon as I saw the scarf tightening up in his hands, I knew there was something wrong with him. He used to call me 'kid' – 'Kid, come here and chat' – because he knew I wouldn't take the piss out of whatever it was that was wrong with him. At that time, geezers didn't tell other geezers: 'I'm suffering with me nerves.'"

"Keith Moon was playing my drums, and I'm looking at him, thinking: 'He's terrible, he can't play."

Frank Hall

Dunnery's problems took a back seat to the band's career – a career that got a boost when their old friend Tony Iommi offered to manage them. Their day-to-day business was overseen by Sabbath associate Wilf Pine. Pine had one foot in the music industry and one foot in the crime industry. He was friends with Sabbath and Zeppelin, and also with the big London gangs and even the New York mafia. "Wilf was a good bloke to know," says Hall. "People were frightened of him and his mates. They used to turn up in Rollers and Lamborghinis, no visible means of income other than frightening people to death."

Iommi decided that Cumbria was too far away from the action and, in 1972, moved Necromandus to a house in Birmingham. During that time they regularly supported Sabbath. Another local band, Judas Priest, opened for them.

It was Iommi who engineered a deal with Vertigo Records and shepherded the band into Morgan Studios in North London to record their debut album, with Rod Stewart producer Mike Butcher. They were on what Hall calls "the poor shift" – nine at night until three or four in the morning – but they didn't care. "It was the first time we'd ever been in a studio," says Hall. "We didn't even know half the stuff in there existed."

Yes were in Morgan at the same time. Hall remembers wandering into a room as Rick Wakeman played his new solo album, *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*, on one of the studio's reel-to-reels. "He didn't know me from Adam," says Hall. "But I said to him, really cheeky: 'We've got a track called *Leaving The Depot*, but it needs a piano or a Mellotron. Can you do it for us?' He said: 'Yes. Could you go as far as a crate of Guinness for payment?'"

Wakeman never did appear on the album, but Iommi added a few licks here and there. The finished article, titled *Necromandus*, was a slab of classic early-70s heavy rock, impressively complex and brutally simple at the same time. At its best, as on the mooted lead-off single *Don't Look Down Frank*, they sounded as good as their mentors Black Sabbath. There was just one hitch: the album was never released. On the eve of an American tour supporting Black Sabbath, Barry Dunnery walked out on Necromandus.

"Baz wouldn't do the tour. He couldn't fly. Just couldn't get on a plane," says Hall. "He didn't tell anybody. He just left. Never came back. But I knew there was something wrong. Maybe he was in a deep depression at the time. We were living hand-to-mouth, nicking potatoes from restaurants to eat. Baz kept saying: 'I can't live like this.' It wasn't *if* he was going to leave, it was when."

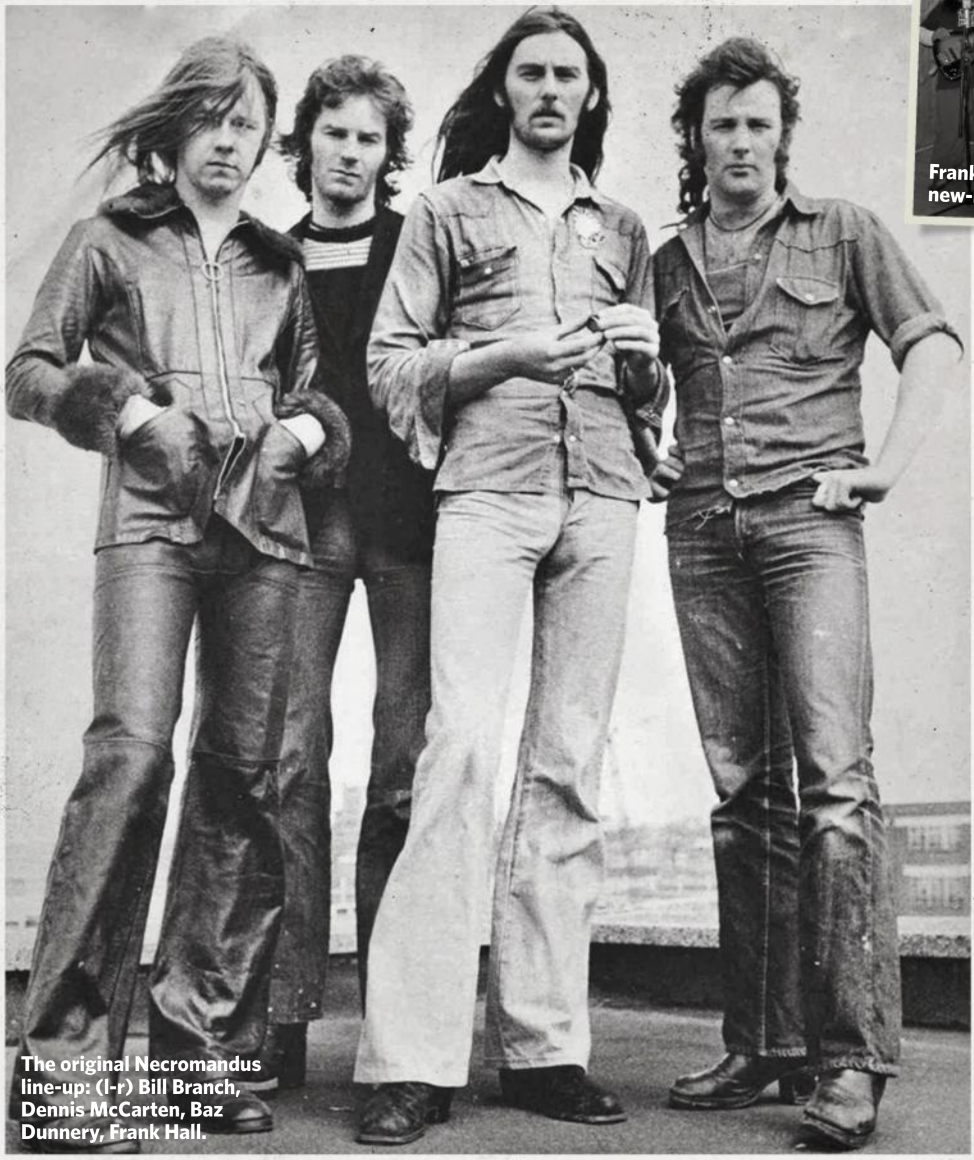
Dunnery's departure marked the end of Necromandus. Having lost their MVP, Vertigo shelved the album. Hall asked Tony Iommi, whose attention was being diverted by Sabbath's Stateside success and looking after Ozzy, if they should carry on. "Only if you can get another guitarist as good as him," replied Iommi. That wasn't going to happen, and Hall knew it.

Necromandus may have been finished, but it's far from the end of Hall's bottomless well of stories. Here's another: a few years later, in 1976, a Range Rover pulled up outside his house. Out got an old friend from Cumbria who worked for Ozzy. "Ozzy's been kicked out of Sabbath," said the friend. "He wants to put a band together with you, Baz and Dennis."

Hall all but rolls his eyes as he says this. He knew what Ozzy was like, and knew just how much of a pain in the arse he would be to work with. But he had nothing to lose. So Hall, McCarten and Dunnery – who was playing music again with Hall in local bands – decamped to Bullrush Cottage, Ozzy's rural home in Staffordshire. They were the original Blizzard Of Ozz, the band who would kick-start Ozzy's solo career and maybe get their own back on the rails. At least that was the plan.

A typical day at Bullrush cottage was chaotic. "We'd wait for him to get up, which was around three in the afternoon: [Ozzy impression]: "Ello man, whaddya want to do?" You'd think: 'For fuck's sake, John,' and try to sober him up."

This meant shoving him in the shower. "He'd come out wrapped in towels and collapse on the floor. Then he'd go: 'Thelma, what time do they open?' And then he'd go up to the Hand & Cleaver and come back at nine o'clock, out of it." ▷



The original Necromandus line-up: (l-r) Bill Branch, Dennis McCarten, Baz Dunnery, Frank Hall.

Frank Hall (drums) and his new-look Necromandus.

They managed to pull it together for long enough to start working on songs. "Baz was writing new songs. But the stuff that was coming out of us was prog rock. You can't imagine Ozzy singing prog rock. God knows where them recordings went. He probably lost them when he went down the pub."

Everyone knew it wasn't going to pan out, but Hall didn't want to bail on his old mate – even when he got a call from his mum. "She said: 'Phil's drum tech just called to find out where you are and what you're doing.' I didn't knew who she meant when she said Phil. I thought she meant someone from Whitehaven."

Phil was Phil Collins, who had recently stepped up to replace Peter Gabriel at the mic in Genesis and needed a replacement for himself in turn. Hall says: "I was torn between Ozzy and Genesis. 'What the hell do I do?' We're putting this together with Ozzy, even though it was dropping to bits cos he's an alcoholic and up-your-nose freak.'"

Loyalty won out. "I turned down Genesis. I reckon I would have been in with a shout of getting it. I had the chops."

"I turned down Genesis. I reckon I would have been in with a shout of getting it. I had the chops."

Frank Hall

Soon afterwards, the Blizzard Of Ozz fell apart. Ozzy returned to Black Sabbath, and Hall, McCarten and Dunnery went back to Cumbria, their last shot at the big time gone. Frank played with a couple of NWOBHM-era bands, Hammerhead and Plateau, then moved to London in the mid-80s, where he covered AC/DC songs in a band with future Slade singer Mal McNulty.

Dunnery joined ELO offshoot Violinksi, playing on their 1979 hit single *Clog Dance*, before history repeated itself. On the eve of an overseas tour, he bailed once more.

Necromandus became a long-vanished speck in the rear-view mirror of history, leaving Hall to dine out on tales of the famous people he had known. Except his own story was far from done.

Never underestimate the doggedness of the fanatic. The Necromandus flame died down, but it was never extinguished, kept flickering down the years by bootleggers, crate-diggers and heavy metal historians. Dodgy copies of the album they had recorded back in the early 70s could be found if you knew where to look. The bootlegs had different names, depending on where you found it: *Quicksand Dreams* or *Orexis Of Death*. The songs had been renamed too, in order to avoid paying publishing royalties. "Me mam first told me about it in about 1995," says Hall. "I'd never heard of it before. I was excited and annoyed."

The album was finally released legitimately in 2005. A few years later it got a reissue via Rise Above Records. By then, Hall was the last surviving member of Necromandus. Bill Branch died in 1995, Dennis McCarten in 2010. Brilliant Barry Dunnery passed away in 2008.

But there's still at least one more chapter left in the story of Necromandus. Enter Tom Tyson, a local producer who has worked with Albert Lee and former ELO violinist Mik Kaminski, among others. Tyson knew Necromandus when he was growing up, just as everybody in the north-east did. He'd worked with the four members separately over the years. "I always wanted to get Necromandus back together," he says today. "They were one of the greatest, most unique bands of their time."

A couple of years ago, Hall asked Tyson to help out on some music he was making and maybe resurrect the Necromandus name. "How can we put it back together when there's nobody left except the drummer?" Tyson wondered. "That's when we brought the others into it."

He helped Frank build a brand new band, bringing in keyboard player John Marcangelo and Bill Branch's soundalike son, John, as vocalist. Slowly they pieced together a new album, titled *Necromandus*, just like its ill-fated predecessor.

The new album is released this month. It's a fitting tribute to the original band and a fine record in its own right. Some of the tracks feature guitar from Barry Dunnery, salvaged from an old rehearsal tape. Hall and Tom Tyson aren't saying which tracks. "It was really emotional when Tom said: 'Get up here and listen to this,'" says Hall. "It was like he was there in the room with us."

After decades in the wilderness, Hall has got the bug again. Or maybe he just never lost it. With Tyson's help, the band have four songs ready for a new album that the producer says could be "ready in six months". They're thinking of asking Rick Wakeman to appear on it again. "Dunno if he'll want a crate of Guinness this time," says Hall.

At this point it's traditional to ask a musician if they have any regrets. The stock answer is "None at all" or "I wouldn't change a thing". Not Frank Hall. "Yeah, all the missed opportunities," he says. "I knew deep down inside that it wasn't going to work with Baz. He couldn't help what was wrong with him. He didn't really understand it. But I wish I had done other things, like gone for Genesis."

The missed opportunities and vanished dreams will always be there. But so will the stories. And the story of Necromandus – and Frank Hall himself – sits right up there alongside them.

Necromandus is available on July 21 via Mandus Music.

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After 14 years on the road and without releasing a new album, **Styx** shocked fans by releasing one out of the blue. Even more shocking is that it's damn good.

Words: **Dave Ling**

Given what else he and his wife could do at home on any given night of the week, Styx guitarist Tommy Shaw – and indeed Mrs Shaw – must really like his band's new album. That's really, *really* like it.

"There's a 5.1 version of it that will come out later in the year," he says, laughing at the absurdity of what he's about to say next. "Every so often I ask her: 'Honey, do you want to get a glass of wine and sit in the studio and just absorb the thing in 5.1?' And she loves to do that. We get completely lost in the storyline, the experience, the whole thing. It's just a fucking trip."

It had better be.

And it's been a long trip for the Chicago band, *The Mission* being their first collection of original material for 14 years (2005's *Big Bang Theory* was a collection of covers). Understandably, Styx are extremely proud of *The Mission*, saying it's their "boldest, most emblematic album" since *Pieces Of Eight* in 1978.

Talking to *Classic Rock*, Shaw and guitarist/vocalist James 'JY' Young both feel that following a lengthy period in the creative doldrums *The Mission* once again legitimises Styx. For too long they had ground out a living on the road, often revisiting past glories, including the 2012 trek based on vintage albums *The Grand Illusion* (1977) and the aforementioned *Pieces Of Eight*.

"Who wants new music from a classic rock band?" Shaw shrugs. "*Cyclorama* [2003] told us the answer to that question. So we hunkered down and touring became what we did. After Ricky Phillips [bassist] joined the band in 2003, we played between a hundred and a hundred and twenty shows per year for fourteen years. It's what kept Styx viable, and we figured out how to do that beautifully."

Something important was missing, though.

"*Cyclorama* went nowhere. In fact, we had more success the following year with a cover of [The Beatles'] *I Am The Walrus* [that appeared on *Big Bang Theory*]," JY admits. "The making of concert videos served its purpose, but it really was time to do something completely new."

After more than a decade of playing the same old songs night after night on the road, now that they have a new album in the shops, Styx feel like a band reborn.

"It's more than that," Shaw insists. "I know it's a cliché, but after being silent for so long this could be our first album. We had another fourteen years of our lives to draw upon."

It's somewhat ironic that it was Shaw, and not Young, who has a degree in Mechanical And Aerospace Engineering, who dreamed up *The Mission*'s futuristic tale of a first manned

"WE PLAYED BETWEEN A HUNDRED AND A HUNDRED AND TWENTY SHOWS PER YEAR FOR FOURTEEN YEARS. IT'S WHAT KEPT STYX VIABLE." TOMMY SHAW

No new album, but plenty of guitars: (l-r) James Young, Tommy Shaw, Chuck Panozzo and Ricky Phillips live at the Roanoke Civic Center in 2013.

mission to Mars in the year 2033. "I had developed a late interest in astrophysics and astronomy," Shaw explains. "When somebody finally gets into a rocket and blasts off to Mars, it will be so exciting. Except the reality is that those people will be leaving behind everything they know and love – probably forever. I was fascinated by how that might feel. It was a goofy kind of a thing that at first I was reluctant to share with my bandmates. When ideas are that young and delicate, you must beware of who you play them to."

Shaw cautiously confided a fragment of the song that later became the track *Mission To Mars* to Will Evankovich, a trusted writing collaborator of many years' standing, who stepped up to be the record's producer. When Evankovich didn't laugh, Shaw knew the project might be worth pursuing – especially after learning that a few nights earlier, Evankovich had quite literally dreamed up an idea that Styx would later shape into the track *Locomotive*. Together they came up with the storyline and then presented the record's early foundations to the rest of the band.

"Laurence [Gowan, keyboards] said he loved it, which gave me the nerve to play it to the others one by one," Shaw recalls. "And that's when I realised it wasn't silly at all – it's a great, dramatic story about a leap into the unknown. The guys jumped in and started adding meat to the bone."

Coincidentally, Styx were invited to the headquarters of NASA's 2015 New Horizons mission to Pluto. "We became friends with some of the people there and they helped us in the story's development," Shaw explains. "They even found us the image of Mars for the label of the vinyl edition."

The Mission was pieced together intermittently during two and a half years of touring. Although the American fans that saw Styx live didn't know it, they had actually heard *Overture*, the opening track, as the band's walk-on music for a full 12 months. As it had been with David Bowie, Avenged Sevenfold and others, the recording of the new album was conducted in complete secrecy, and Styx elected to drop the results onto the release schedule with no warning of any kind. However – and wary of sounding pretentious – Young says that none of the band's associates were made to sign official gagging orders.

"We wanted to make a splash with this album so I told a few lies to keep things quiet," he says, laughing. "But after so many years away, most people had given up asking whether we would ever make another album again."

Styx have a long history of concept records: 1981's excellent *Paradise Theatre* used the Chicago venue of the same name as a metaphor for the decay of American society during late 1970s. After that there was 1983's *Kilroy Was Here*, an often comedic rock opera statement on music censorship and government oppression – an album they were rightly pilloried for, despite it selling more than a million copies, and which played a part in Styx's break-up the following year.

Although parts of *The Mission* might indicate otherwise, despite some sections being linked thematically, the album (awarded nine out of 10 by Geoff Barton in the last issue of *Classic Rock*) has no deep meaning.

"Only inasmuch as that if we were to take everybody out of their political situations and put them up onto a space station, we'd all behave much more humanely," Shaw believes. "It's a microcosm of society."

And while *Gone Gone Gone*, the album's first single, reflects past Styx glories, such moments are often linked by instrumental interludes. For a band that made their name via radio rock, the overarching feel is somewhat uncommercial.

"Well, what radio is there?" Shaw says, laughing. "Why write for something that no longer exists? In the past we've got lucky with songs like *Too Much Time On My Hands* but we're an album rock band. It's what we've always been."

"Styx has never been associated with being pompous before," Young says playfully, then belts out the chorus of *Lords Of The Ring* before offering: "I think this time we wanted to go beyond where we'd gone before, while still incorporating the great elements that were a part of *The Grand Illusion* and *Pieces Of Eight*. The album might be a little less accessible than some might have expected, but we hope it's a listening experience. It deserves to be heard from the standpoint of how ambitious it is, and the craft that went into making it."

Improvements in technology mean that music piracy – another factor in the band's hiatus – was less of an issue than a few years ago. Styx kept a tight lid on *The Mission* until the day of its release, which came via their own label Alpha Dog 2T, and right up until the manufacturing stage, it existed only as some WAV files on a laptop. "Some of my friends were mad at me for not sending it to them," Shaw says, "but we couldn't take the risk of one person putting it on the internet."

With the industry having changed, and many of the middlemen they'd loathed dealing with in the past now increasingly sidelined, Styx embraced rock music's new business model.

"Now we don't have to go to radio to plead our case," Shaw enthuses. "We can get in front of our fans directly."

Shaw says that much as he was delighted by the shockwaves generated by the news of a new Styx album, his hopes for it remain firmly grounded.

"We know this is a great record, but before that we did a covers album and some re-recordings, and all of those DVDs and live records," he explains. "Look at how old we are, and the arc of our career reached some pretty big peaks. We've got to be realistic – expectation levels might not be that high."

There's no denying that the Styx story is steeped in history. *The Mission* is their sixteenth studio album, and 2017 marks 45 years since the band signed their first recording contract, with Wooden Nickel Records.

"It doesn't seem quite that long to me," says Young. "But then again, we did our first concert without Dennis DeYoung on July 8, 1999, and it's undeniable that time is flying by. But even after all these years, whenever we get on stage and people sing those songs back to us, it's a renewal of the reason I wanted to do this from the very start. It makes me feel like I'm back in my thirties, and not sixty-seven-and-a-half years old. And that's a wonderful thing."

For anyone not aware of the extent of Styx's fame and popularity during the 1970s and 80s, it's worth noting that from *The Grand Illusion* to *Paradise Theatre*, the band notched up four consecutive multi-platinum-selling albums, and travelled between shows by private jet. And yet Styx were viciously reviled by the media. Sufficient time has passed for Young to be able to laugh when he's reminded that *Rolling Stone*

"AFTER SO MANY YEARS AWAY, MOST PEOPLE HAD GIVEN UP ASKING WHETHER WE WOULD EVER MAKE ANOTHER ALBUM."

JAMES YOUNG

Styx in 1981: (l-r) Dennis DeYoung, Tommy Shaw, James Young, Chuck Panozzo, John Panozzo.

REX/GETTY

"THIS IS THE BEST INCARNATION OF STYX THAT THERE'S BEEN. WE HAVE THIS SUPREME CONFIDENCE ABOUT HOW GREAT WE ARE, AND IT SHOWS." JAMES YOUNG

called *Pieces Of Eight* "a parking lot full of whale vomit", but there's no doubting that such barbs were once painful.

"All the same," he says, "those were the glory days of melodic rock, bringing success beyond my wildest expectations. It was a thoroughly joyful phase that preceded our era of conflict."

Young is referring to the years riven with internal tension between the rest of the group and Dennis DeYoung, Styx's co-founding keyboard player and singer who left acrimoniously in 1999, having contracted a rare virus that made him susceptible to light, preventing him from touring their poorly received album *Brave New World*.

Refusing to wait around on DeYoung, Styx hired Laurence Gowan as his replacement. Eighteen years later, the flamboyant Canadian former solo artist has more than earned his spot in the group, although Shaw acknowledges the fact that some fans still crave a reunion. "Dennis and Styx are like an old divorced couple," Shaw says. "Those songs are our kids, but the truth is that we're happier apart. The only time I could foresee some sort of interaction with Dennis is if and when we make it into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, should that happen in our lifetime."

Perhaps inevitably, Young firmly believes that Styx should already have been inducted, "based on how long we've been doing this and the amount of records we've sold", but he appreciates that it's all a bit of a lottery.

"Maybe we'll get there posthumously. I should probably stop saying bad things about Jann Wenner [chairman of the Hall Of Fame and a founder and publisher of *Rolling Stone*], especially as he and I have clashed heads before."

In Styx today, Ricky Phillips is the band's official bassist, but co-founder Chuck Panozzo – who 16 years ago came out as a gay man living with Aids, and who also beat testicular cancer – plays on the new album's track *Hundred Million Miles From Home*, and he still sporadically joins Styx on stage.

"Chuck has been through so much – he's in good health at the moment and music really has brought him back to life," Shaw says proudly.

"When Chuck plays with us, the middle section of *Come Sail Away* is always my favourite part of the night," he continues. "When that song breaks down into the synth solo, I watch the joy on Chuck's face and I can still picture him, James and myself as young men back in 1976, driving from gig to gig in a station wagon."

Styx will be busy touring North America until the end of 2017, often in the company of REO Speedwagon. They hope to make it to Europe at some point in 2018.

"Okay, here's the dream scenario," Shaw divulges. "The fans get to know the album and its songs take root. We already begin the show with *Overture* and *Gone Gone Gone*, but over the summertime we will gradually introduce more and more of its songs to the set.

"Meanwhile, the band will continue learning how to play the whole thing in its entirety – we can do about half of it now. That's the show we'd like to bring to the UK: *The Mission* and another of our albums in their entirety, plus a forty-minute encore."

Thanks to those 14 years of heavy touring, Styx remain a powerful, well-drilled live act. In the past 17 years there have been remarkably few appearances in the UK: firstly as headliners for the *Big Bang Theory* album in 2005, then two years later as guests on a Deep Purple arena tour, and lastly as part of a three-band bill below Journey and Foreigner in the summer of 2011. On the latter, Styx played a turbocharged, fat-free hour crammed with hits. Afterwards the consensus was that they'd wiped the floor with both of the bands that followed them.

"We read some reviews that suggested we should have been headlining, which was gratifying," Young says. "Look, those other bands are friends of ours. Journey have sold double or triple the amount of records we've sold. But while Jonathan Cain [keyboards] is a dear friend and a great talent, he's not a great showman. Neal Schon can play circles around almost anyone on the planet but he stands there and he plays, whereas the sense of fun and joy that Styx project is considerable.

"Sure, we've lost a few key members along the way, but each replacement has been world class, and to me, this is the best incarnation of Styx that there's been," Young continues. "Wherever we go, we have this supreme confidence about how great we are, and it shows. Unlike a lot of other bands, we are not enhanced [by samples] through the PA. Everything you hear is us."

"We're a good band," Shaw agrees, although with slightly more tact. "We play our best every night. Sometimes we have exceptional shows and sometimes they're good, but they're never, ever bad.

"We are that classic 1957 Chevy Convertible that needed a new engine and suspension," he continues, warming to the theme. "It's still shiny, it looks and performs great and people always want to drive her. And as we began to make this record, woaaah! Suddenly vinyl was back. Had we needed a signpost that we were on the right path then that was it right there." ❶

The Mission is out now via Alpha Dog 2T.

CHEAP THRILLS

THE £50 RECORD STORE CHALLENGE

Biters

Words: Polly Glass Photos: Will Ireland

"What positions do you want us in?" Tuk Smith calls over to *Classic Rock*'s photographer as we begin our photoshoot outside Truck Store in Oxford. "What *sexual* positions?"

The Biters frontman/mastermind – a slim, tattooed hybrid of Stiv Bators and Noel Fielding – is no wallflower, even at the tail end of a mammoth tour supporting fellow southerners Blackberry Smoke. It's been a successful, albeit exhausting run of packed shows in enormous venues. Tonight, however, Biters will go rogue and play in a pub deep in the Oxfordshire countryside. The band's publicist and I don't realise quite how deep until we're all driving there in the van later. Smith points incredulously at thatched roofs, which clearly aren't a 'thing' in Atlanta, Georgia. His bandmates look similarly curious. You can't help wondering how the local audience will greet this whirlwind of leather, styled hair and 70s hooks.

Truck Store
Oxford, UK

But before all that we're in Oxford vinyl haven Truck Store. It's small and extremely inviting, with racks stuffed with eclectic, era-spanning classic rock, glam, metal and punk, along with recent releases. We find Smith swerving enthusiastically from a Status Quo 'best of' to records by Jellyfish and Queen. The shop's friendly owners let him look through boxes behind the counter, and he disappears for a while. As he browses, his bejewelled hand remains curled around a coffee cup, purchased from the in-house cafe.

"I wanna have a record shop one day with a coffee shop," he drawls, pulling out a copy of David Bowie's *Space Oddity*.

For all their retro trappings, Biters are still millennials. They went through "the grunge phase", soaking up the likes of Nirvana and the Foo Fighters, as well as Green Day and NOFX along the way. It was during their latter high-school years that they embraced the icons whose style (musical and visual) inspires them today – purveyors of a specific, rather British kind of glam.

"For us it's T.Rex, not Poison. Sweet, not Mötley Crüe," Smith reasons. "And with Mott The Hoople, they're called 'glam' but Ian Hunter was really working-class."

Those guys paid attention to their looks, and wore outlandish clothes, but they appealed to the working man. Do you identify with that mindset?

"Oh hell yeah!" replies wiry, amicable guitarist Matt Gabs, holding Cab Calloway's *Jumpin' Jive*.

"There's a lot of smoke and mirrors on the internet," Smith continues. "We're good with social networking, trying to keep the mystery, but it's really gruelling. It's not glamorous, a lot of it's just a lot of work. But nowadays that's what it takes to play rock'n'roll. I hope that's what it takes to get an edge above other bands."

Over by racks of heavy metal, bassist Philip Anthony eagerly studies sleeves laden with skulls and blood. He stops at a couple of Magnum LPs.

"I've never heard 'em but the cover's pretty cool," he muses. "I think a lot of metal bands have cool album covers. They're cheesy but they're cool. When I was a kid I loved looking at heavy metal covers like Dio. They're like horror-movie covers, all the stuff I'm not supposed to look at as a child."

Tall and pretty – in a 'goth girl's crumpet' sort of way – Anthony fronted his own hard rock band, Steadlür, before joining Biters. You can tell

> "For us it's T.Rex, not Poison. Sweet, not Mötley Crüe."
> **TUK SMITH**

through his superior backing vocals and easy, friendly swagger.

A couple of aisles away guitarist Gabs chuckles as he finds a Devo record, wedged inconspicuously next to Dio. "People either love this or hate this." He then finds a copy of *Mott*. "I think this one might be mine," he says, grinning.

Growing up in the US south in the 90s, most of Biters' formative listening experiences came from local radio in their parents' trucks. "It was all FM radio and cassettes," Anthony says.

"I think it was the same for all of us," says Smith. "Your parents listen to classic rock radio in the south, and everybody drives – there's no public transport like in a big city. So they drive and listen to Boston, Queen, the Eagles… We had a cassette player, and my mum bought me *Back In Black*. That was my first album. She grew up seeing AC/DC – she said she went to go see them when she was pregnant with me. And she loved Tom Petty."

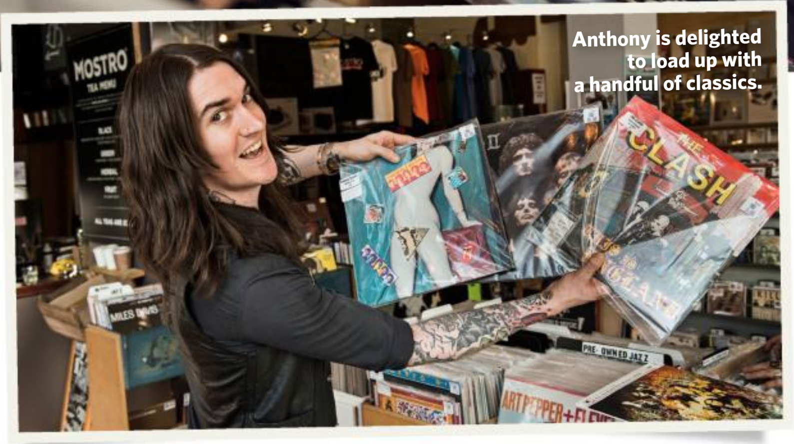
Back in Truck Store, drummer Joey O'Brien rifles through some old-school punk, settling on a record by 70s/80s New York punks Plasmatics. Formerly a dominatrix's security guard back in Atlanta ("I have a girlfriend now so I don't do that any more," he says with a grin), he's quieter than his bandmates, but pleasingly unpredictable. As talk turns to the first albums they all fell in love with, O'Brien veers sharply from the meaty material we're expecting. "I think it was Elton John's *Yellow Brick Road*," he muses. "That was the first concert my parents took me to, and they got me the album at the merch booth. I'd have been about seven or eight. I still love it, and I have it on vinyl now, double disc."

For Baltimore-based Gabs – who in the shop moves from Cab Calloway and Chuck ▷

"Can you feel it?" Smith tunes in to some vinyl vibes.

Gabs and O'Brien on the hunt for some plastic fantastic.

You'll wear it well: Gabs grabs a tee.



Anthony is delighted to load up with a handful of classics.

> "My mum f**kin' shoplifted *Appetite For Destruction* for me."
> **MATT GABS**

Berry to the aforementioned Mott – his first LP was *Appetite For Destruction.*

"My mum fuckin' shoplifted it for me," he says with a chuckle. "I didn't ask for it, she just said: 'You'd like this, it's got some skulls on the cover…' Then we got the entire Guns N' Roses back catalogue up to *The Spaghetti Incident*, and it was all I listened to until the following Christmas when I got Nirvana's *Nevermind*, Metallica's Black Album and Offspring's *Smash* [laughs]."

His father, an "old Italian hard-ass man" who runs a cab company, served jail time for marijuana-related deeds when Gabs was a child. "He's not full Sicilian, so it's not like he was in the Mob," he says as his bandmates collapse into laughter at their softly-spoken guitarist's 'mobster' roots. "He just did some shit and went to jail for it."

Biters' native Atlanta is an interesting musical hub. The city's scene is diverse, with a healthy punk contingent, but the place is also in close proximity to the southern Bible Belt and its religious, gospel-fuelled associations. It's the kind of influence that informed their countrymen Blackberry Smoke, but bypassed the Biters.

"That's a calibre of family values I never experienced," Smith says with a laugh.

Anthony, by contrast, had parents who tried to make a good churchgoing boy out of him. His mother was a hairdresser, his father was a cop who served as a Green Beret in the military. It was a conservative, sheltered upbringing. It didn't work – by the 00s Anthony was fronting Steadlür and carving out a life as a rock star.

"Let me tell me you a story about his brother real quick," Smith dives in, at breakneck speed but crystal clear. "They were in a band [Steadlür] when they got signed – we used to party a shit-tonne, brutal, unspeakable acts of craziness – and his brother was the drummer of the band. I was in a band too, and we started touring. But then his brother was the biggest party animal you ever met, and he did so much cocaine his heart about stopped, and Jesus talked to him. He had a 'Jesus moment'. To this day he sings in church and thinks Phil is a degenerate, and he has a bunch of babies and they're not allowed to read Harry Potter books, and all this weird, crazy shit."

Smith's own parents separated when he was young. His AC/DC-loving mother became a nurse and his father runs a gym, called Tuck's Power Dome. A concrete 'dive gym' with only free weights, and the slightly imposing tagline Last Of The Real Gyms, it's not for the faint-hearted – or anyone looking for a pilates class.

"It's has shit spray-painted on the walls like 'Go Heavy Or Go Home'," Smith tells us. "This is not a social club. It's all metal, and blue-collar dudes after work with work boots on and jeans, grunting."

He puts his "aggressive" side down to a childhood spent within those walls.

"Can you imagine being a child in an atmosphere like that, having these fucking crazy, testosterone-induced weightlifters give you life lessons?" he says. "The shit that came out their mouths, that's why I'm so foul. It was awesome though."

The comparatively androgynous likes of Bolan, Bowie and Johnny Thunders didn't reach Smith's radar until "way into high school". This gave Smith Snr time to try to press some more butch aspirations onto his son.

"My dad wanted me to be a professional baseball player," he explains. "He didn't want me to play guitar. Every time I'd get in trouble or go to jail he'd just say: 'Leave him in there.' And he'd want me to go into the military or work in the Caterpillar factory. But now he understands. He's cool. He's a man, not a pussy."

Turned on, tuned in: O'Brien takes some records for a spin.

A few hours later, as showtime approaches at the George & Dragon in picturesque Shutford, Biters' own mettle looks set to be tested.

"It's not that busy, boys," their tour manager says as the band gather in the pub kitchen (tonight functioning as the unlikely Green Room).

"That's okay, we're gonna treat it like is," says Gabs, unhesitatingly. And they do.

Amazingly, by the time Biters stride out into the restaurant room – the tables removed for tonight's show – the place is packed. Diehard Biters fans mix with a curious clutch of locals.

The band play a superb set, brimming with gusto and revitalised nostalgia, with Smith channelling Marc Bolan-esque vibes on new songs such as *Stone Cold Love*.

So what is it about those glam legends that appeals to this young rock aficionado?

"They have that larger-than-life, otherworldly persona," he says afterwards, catching his breath as fans squeeze past, grinning excitedly and offering congratulations. "They felt like cosmic beings. Marc Bolan felt like some weird fairy from another dimension, and Bowie felt like some weird alien. I think that's lacking in rock'n'roll big-time right now; everybody wants to be very attainable and have videos of what they had for lunch. But you'd never see David Bowie eating a fucking sandwich.

"On this record [*The Future Ain't What It Used To Be*] there's some really good, catchy, badass songs – and that's not me being cocky," Smith adds, seriously. "I can turn it on and it makes you feel good. So hopefully it works out, because I don't know how much harder I can push."

The Future Ain't What It Used To Be is out now on Earache Records.

CHEAP THRILLS

CHECKOUT

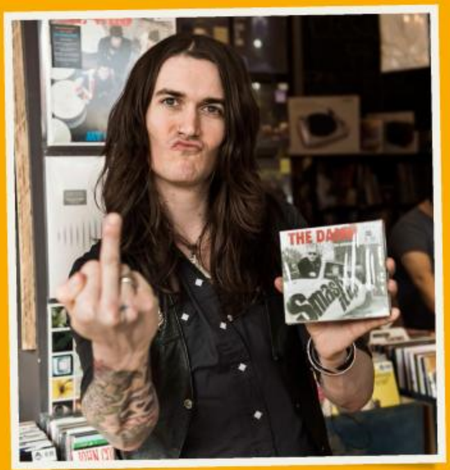
HOW BITERS SPENT THEIR £50 RECORD SHOP BUDGET.

"We pretty much all picked British records, didn't we?" Gabs observes. "And we weren't even trying. We love the Stooges too, Alice Cooper, Cheap Trick… But Britain has produced some of the best. It's had everybody."

Tuk Smith (VOCALS/GUITAR)

David Bowie – Space Oddity

"This is super-cool. It was in the back. I own a lot of David Bowie records but I don't actually own this."



Philip Anthony (BASS)

The Damned – The Anthology 1976-87

"Everyone else got vinyl so I got a CD. I'm the badass in the group… But yeah, The Damned, great band. The singer's fucking awesome. He paved the way for a lot of goth-punk that came out in the eighties: 45 Grave, The Cramps, other bands…

Matt Gabs (LEAD GUITAR)

Mott The Hoople – Mott

"I bought the CD when I was eighteen but it had a different cover, same tracklisting, and it changed my life. I was well into David Bowie before I even discovered Mott The Hoople, so when I heard that Mick Ronson was on this record, I was like: 'Okay, give it here!' It's start-to-finish perfect – no skippers."

Joey O'Brien (DRUMS)

Girlschool – Demolition

"I'm really pleased with this one. I found out about Girlschool when I was in high school, getting into Motörhead. I know they toured with Motörhead, so I checked them out and liked them. So that's how I heard 'em – through Lemmy. Thanks, Lemmy."

Progressive Music Awards 2017

in association with ORANGE AMPLIFICATION

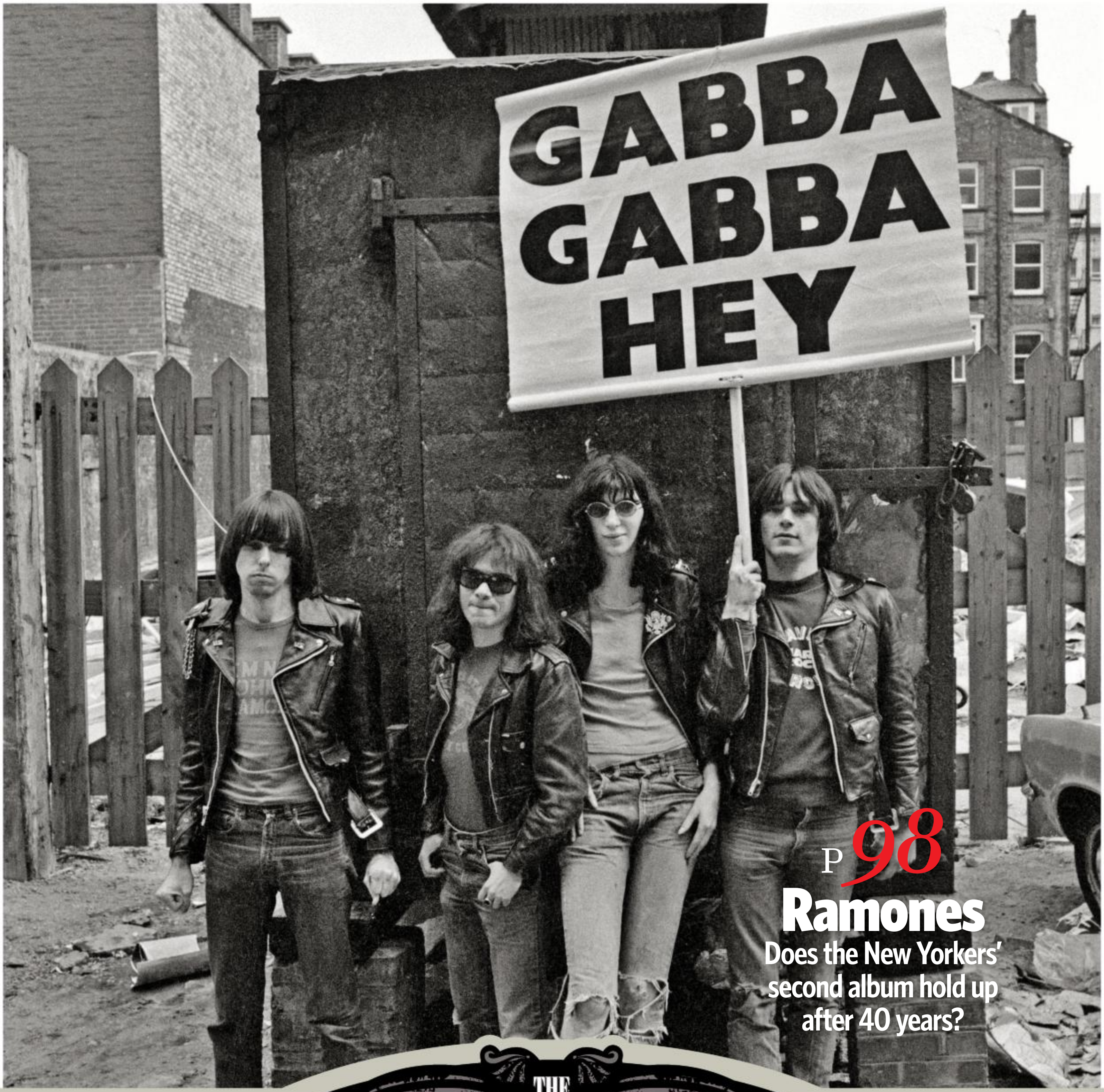
The Progressive Music Awards are back for 2017. Prog's biggest night of the year will take place on September 14 at London's prestigious Underglobe.

This year **Opeth** lead the charge with four nominations. And there are also nominations for **Pink Floyd**, Marillion, **Big Big Train**, Dream Theater, **Roger Waters**, Steve Hackett, **Rush**, Yes, **Anathema**, King Crimson, **Hawkwind**, Alan Parsons Project, **VdGG** and more…

So who will you vote for this year?

Make sure you have your say when you cast your vote at

www.progmagazine.com/awards



P98

Ramones

Does the New Yorkers' second album hold up after 40 years?

THE HARD STUFF

The Ultimate ROCK REVIEWS Section

Classic Rock Ratings

- 10/10: A Classic
- 9/10: Excellent
- 8/10: Very Good
- 7/10: Good
- 6/10: Above Average
- 5/10: Average
- 4/10: Below Par
- 3/10: A Disappointment
- 2/10: Pants
- 1/10: Pish

Ingredients:

P84 Albums
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P102 Buyer's Guide
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20 PAGES 100% ROCK

Edited By Ian Fortnam
ian.fortnam@teamrock.com

REX

ROB FENN

Alice Cooper

Paranormal EARMUSIC

Alice shows he's still got spirit, on an album that still rocks, but has no shocks.

I don't want to alarm you, but the fate of rock'n'roll's future lies in Alice Cooper's bony hands, and if this album is garbage, then we're doomed. I mean, you should know that much right now. At this point in his career, Alice is one of the very few 70s-era rockers still vying for relevance. Sure, he'll play *I'm Eighteen* when he's 81, until he needs those stunt crutches for real, but he's also concerned with writing solid, biting, hook-heavy rock'n'roll songs right now, and he's still dreaming of his next big hit and his next major cultural comeback.

And if it can work for him, maybe it can work for you. Maybe if Alice is cool again, you will be too. Maybe if the kids dig this record, maybe they'll dig rock'n'roll again. Maybe we won't all be shuffled off to the elephants' graveyard to die lonely, vinyl-only deaths while the youth party on with their EDM and their vaporwave Spotify playlists and The Decemberists or whatever it is they listen to. There's a lot riding on this fucking album, man.

Well, here's the good news: it doesn't suck. It's no *Killer* or *Billion Dollar Babies*. I mean, it's not even a *Flush The Fashion*, really. But it's got enough fist-shaking brain bangers to get us through the summer at least, and for long-time fans of shock rock's greatest grandpa, *Paranormal* offers a potentially breathtaking bonus: two songs from the surviving members of the original Alice Cooper Band.

Alice has never been one to needlessly share the spotlight, so those tracks are on a second disc, but at least one of 'em, the gender-bending glam-stomper *Genuine American Girl*, is everything you could possibly want from the gang that brought you *School's Out*. A tongue-in-cheek tale of a cross-dressing bruiser, like all classic Coop songs it veers wildly from one genre to the next: a little 50s teen tragedy pop schmaltz here, a little mid-70s glitter-punk slither there. It's great stuff.

The second ACB track, *You And All Your Friends*, is more traditional and less interesting, a Who-esque hard-rock rave-up that's more of a jam than a killer cut. Still, these are the first tracks from this groundbreaking band since 1973. That's a big deal, and with the original band touring again, it may be a taster for more to come.

The album proper leaves the straight-up horror concept album trappings of 2011's *Welcome 2 My Nightmare* behind, offering up a grab bag of radio-ready rockers peppered with the kind of stunt-casting Coop's been piling on his albums since MC5 main man Wayne Kramer waltzed into 2003's *Eyes Of Alice Cooper*. This time around there are guest spots from Billy Gibbons, Roger Glover and U2 drummer Larry Mullen, Jr, and these choices are pretty indicative of where this album's at, musically speaking.

This is a classic rock record: straight-up, no rap, no lo-fi garage rock, no weirdo new wave, no real curveballs. It's Alice and his favourite producer Bob Ezrin paying homage to Deep Purple, Jimi Hendrix, the Stones and the banging cowbell era.

The opening title track is probably the only real deviation, a throwback to the theatrical pomp of Alice's mid-70s top-hat showbiz phase. It's a lot to swallow but quickly gives way to the simple head-bopping teenage dirtbag thrills of *Dead Flies* and the chugging guitars and Purple-powered organ flail of *Fireball*. *Paranormal*'s monster, if you're looking for feral, ripsnorting rock'n'roll, is the glam-punky *Rats*, a real jet-screamer, positively the most energetic blast of teenage noise you're ever gonna get from a 70-year-old geezer.

> 'The takeaway is that Alice Cooper can still kick out the jams.'

Elsewhere, it's mostly hit or miss. *The Sound Of A* is straight-up Pink Floyd worship. *Holy Water* is goofy horn-rock. *Paranoiac Personality* is fun but probably a little too disco Def Lep for its own good. *I've Fallen In Love And I Can't Get Up* features Billy Gibbons on guitar and sounds like a *Fandango* outtake. *Dynamite Road* is standard, black-eyed barroom boogie. And all of it is over-produced, autotuned and sanitized for your protection, a Bob Ezrin trademark of late. The end.

Taken as a whole, it's a pretty patchwork affair, but so are all Alice Cooper albums, even the great ones. And while this isn't one of the great ones, it also doesn't sound like the work of a washed-up has-been who's out of time and ideas. Have you heard that last Meat Loaf record? Or Danzig's? There are very few rockers of Alice Cooper's stature that can still deliver the goods.

The important takeaway, especially with *Rats*, *Dead Files* and *Genuine American Girl*, is that Alice Cooper, with or without his old cohorts, can still kick out the jams, brothers and sisters. Phew.

Sleazegrinder

Tytan

Justice Served HIGH ROLLER

And Justice... for all.

Formed by man-mountain bassist Kevin Riddles in 1981 after his exit from Angel Witch (along with that band's drummer, Dave Dufort), Tytan perhaps ended up more notable for the volume and pedigree of their musicians than for their music. Past or future members of AC/DC, Judas Priest, Lion, Lionheart, A II Z and many more surrounded Riddles before the band broke up two years later.

This is something of a travesty as *Rough Justice*, issued posthumously, was a tuneful collection that straddled the gap between melodic hard rock and heavy metal. Now, 36 years on, this follow-up introduces an all-new line-up. Alas, that means no Kal Swan on vocals, though Tom Barna is a handy successor.

Justice Served repeats the formula of the debut – meaty melodies despatched with steely slickness – and although certain selections don't appear quite as instant first time around, they grow with repeated spins.

Dave Ling

Temple Of Lies

The Serial Killer Suite

ATTIC

Doom metallers' hook-laden, death-fixated third album.

Ever heard a concept album whose 'concept' you completely grasp? Well, add the third album from these hairy East Midlanders to the 'Your guess is as good as mine' list. But disregarding the murder/death/gruesomeness lyrical theme that broadly unites these songs, what matters more is that *The Serial Killer Suite* rocks as hard as anything this Stoner-influenced quartet have produced thus far.

Epic Doom's staccato assault seems to address how we make a circus out of a *'freak of society'*, but that's about as clear as it gets, lyrically. Meanwhile, taut, muscular riff-hooks abound, alongside melodramatic tritone intervals, pummelling bass drums and growling vocals. And if you can live with some pretty hoary old double entendres (*'Open wide and let me come inside'*), you'll be absorbed long enough to try working out just what they're saying about serial killers, the universe and everything else.

Johnny Sharp

Quiet Riot

Road Rage FRONTIERS

Second time lucky.

Anybody who heard the original version of this album, due for release earlier this year, was very relieved when it was scrapped. It was honestly awful, and how much of this was down to previous singer Seann Nichols is obvious now that he's been replaced by James Durbin.

The Mk.II *Road Rage* sounds exciting and energised. Durbin has spirit and commitment, the songs are more rounded, and this comes across as a band who've rediscovered their mojo.

There's a bluesier, considerably elevated attitude here that has more in common with Aerosmith or Ratt than the big-hair era that made the band's name. Quiet Riot have gelled into a tightly coiled unit on their best record in decades.

Malcolm Dome

Chris Brockbank's Phantom Mk V

Phantom BAD REPUTATION

Veteran Aussie rocker gets his (fifth) act together.

Such is the apparent depth of Chris Brockbank's devotion to all things Purple, he's even named his band Mk V. A well-established barroom performer around his native Sydney, Brockbank's influences are undeniable on this French label release – Jeff Morris's chunky organ has Jon Lord's fingerprints plastered all over it, and singer Steve Mulry channels both Dio and Gillan.

However, it's Brockbank's Blackmore-ish Strat and punchy songs that hit the spot hardest, even if *So Clear* seems to be auditioning for mid-period Rainbow and *One O'Clock* rather rewrites *Speed King*. They even get away, in 2017, with a song titled *Keep On Rockin' And Rollin'*, which boogies exactly how you would expect it to.

But they won't apologise for loving this kind of old-school hard rock, and you should be equally unashamed to lap it up.

Johnny Sharp

Chris Robinson Brotherhood

Barefoot In The Head SILVER ARROW

Band of brothers: the former Black Crowes frontman flies again on a wave of good vibes.

Considering how ugly the eventual split of the Black Crowes was, ripping apart not just the band but also the fraternal bond between frontman Chris Robinson and guitarist Rich, it's been gratifying to see how much joy the former is taking from this non-biological Brotherhood he's built. They're clearly in something of a fertile period – this is their third studio album in two years – something we can probably put down to the fact that they seem to be having an absolute whale of a time.

Predictability may not be the most rock'n'roll starting point in the world, but in the case of *Barefoot In The Head*, having a good inkling of what it's all about before hitting 'play' is as comforting as the music held within. Rather than straying too far from the path, Robinson returns with his usual stew of blues, country, warm psychedelia and rock'n'roll. But within that template, they've left a trail of surprises to uncover, and the band have built themselves a playground and given themselves the time and space to thoroughly explore every corner.

Opener *Behold The Seer* sets the scene with a moment of extreme, strutting old-school funkiness, before they skip their way through sweet, simple, clear-eyed romance (the drifting, hazy sunshine of *She Shares My Blanket*), beautiful sleepy pedal steel (*Blonde Light Of Morning*) and cheerful self-help affirmations that pinpoint the album's Californian birthplace with military-level accuracy (*Good To Know*).

They lay their debt to their heroes bare, too. It doesn't always work, or at least it won't always be to all tastes. *Blue Star Woman* is horribly hokey, a lopsided, loose-lipped amble through a hazy night spent tumbling in soggy bedclothes of questionable cleanliness with the mystery lady of the title. Sadly, it tips that little too far into becoming a parody of The Doors at their most old-time-music-hall daft. But on the other hand, *Hark, The Herald Hermit Speaks* pays playful tribute to Bob Dylan with its barked poetry and barbed lyricism, and is a delight.

They're at their best, though, when things are kept simple and sincere, as on the heartfelt country of *High Is Not The Top*, with its instantly affecting, ungilded assertion: *'If you don't know heartache then you don't know love.'*

Barefoot In The Head is a little ray of light beaming through these dark days.

Emma Johnston

Accept

The Rise Of Chaos

NUCLEAR BLAST

Enduring Euro-metal champs are still restless and wild.

If Accept still means *Balls To The Wall* to you, well, join the club, because it still means that to the band too. The German power-metal pioneers really hit their stride with that landmark 1985 release and they've been chasing that wrecking ball buzz ever since. Sure, the production is better these days, but under the gloss they remain the same snarling, snapping heavy metal beasts they were back when Udo Dirkschneider was still wielding his truncheon for them.

Guitarist Wolf Hoffmann and bassist Peter Baltes are the remaining holdouts from the original band, but former TT Quick frontman Mark Tornillo has taken up the mantle since their 2012 comeback, and his gravel-gargling warble is nearly as delightfully nasty as Udo's, especially on *Chaos*'s most audacious track, *Kool Aid*, a real return-to-form beast of acid-spitting street-level rock'n'roll that's as close to their 1980 hit *I'm A Rebel* as anything they've done in decades.

And the rest of the album, from storming opener *Die By The Sword* to rabble-rousing anthem *Analog Man*, will tear your face clean off.

Sleazegrinder

The Nights

The Nights FRONTIERS MUSIC

Old-school melodic rock is reborn in Finland.

In the wrong hands, The Nights' debut album could have come across as pure parody. And yet, with their slick melodic rock, with its heart planted firmly in the 80s, their sincerity and genuine passion for the great power ballad generation shine through infectiously.

It helps, of course, that they're really good at writing this stuff. Keyboard lines billow around them like an aural wind machine, guitar solos howl for attention, soaring 'woah-ohs' provide the momentum, and the art of the fist-pumping, ultra-polished chorus is reborn.

The gloriously ripe *Juliette*, for example, sounds like it's been airdropped straight from *Top Gun* – *'Juliette, Juliette, came from the stars on a private jet.'*

Missing the old crowd? There's hope for you here.

Emma Johnston

Robin Trower

Time And Emotion

MANHATON RECORDS

Guitar god still going strong on 22nd studio album.

In truth, there's little about *Time And Emotion* to distinguish it from Robin Trower's preceding five albums – since he took over lead vocals himself, in fact. But when moody three-piece electric blues is made as stylishly as this, it can stand reiteration.

It's ironic that in the 1970s, his guitar playing was sometimes slated for echoing Jimi Hendrix. Nearly 50 years on, Trower's deftness and dexterity would surely have been admired by the late and greatest guitar god himself. Indeed, had Jimi lived, I'd wager he'd have been making music like this *alongside* RT.

From that perspective, it's easy to enjoy an 11-song set that, while rarely veering far from Trower's trademark moody groove, amounts to another masterclass in Stratocaster blues solos. Better to revel in these than worry about the songs that frame them.

Neil Jeffries

Shaman's Harvest

Red Hands Black Deeds

MASCOT

Reaping their own harvest.

We may have our problems with a divided nation and blah blah, but the growing growls of angst from all sectors of the American population can make it hard for a decent, hard-working, Midwestern rock band to get their own grim message across.

Fortunately, Shaman's Harvest got the basic shape and substance of their post-grunge southern hard-rock style down on 2014's *Smokin' Hearts And Broken Guns*. They've even survived the replacement of their lead guitarist and drummer without any lasting damage.

On *Red Hands Black Deeds* they set about consolidating their niche into something compulsive and distinctive. Singer Nathan Hunt keeps it

carefully focused rather than just letting it all spill out, and producer Keith Armstrong has taught the rest of the band the importance of detail when it comes to maintaining identity. This is evident on the slow-grinding *Soul Crusher* and the more urgent, country tinged *Off The Tracks*.

Hugh Fielder

The Tangent

The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery *INSIDEOUT*

World set to rights via the medium of prog.

With their conscientious commentary on the struggles of refugees, the building of walls and the bile of the *Daily Mail*, this is a politico-prog album in the vein of Roger Waters' work – only with tunes.

The Tangent's ninth sees Andy Tillison driving five lengthy, labyrinthine pieces with help from prog staples like Luke Machin, Jonas Reingold and Theo Travis. Its intricacies never bore: like Caravan or Robert Wyatt, it knows musicianship should never stifle mood.

As a state-of-the-planet rant, it's sophisticated and spot-on. *A Few Steps Down The Wrong Road* includes a monologue about a fallen empire over a fat jazz groove, while the 23-minute title track pleads for more empathy – less media fixation on trivia and better wages for nurses – while digressing into sections that echo Rush or Genesis. Telling England how to be more sound.

Chris Roberts

Cock Sparrer

Forever *RANDALE/PIRATES PRESS*

Street-punk legends further refine an unrefined formula.

Cock Sparrer's career predates punk. They're just as much pioneers as the Hollywood Brats or Eddie And The Hot Rods, but whenever those BBC4 documentaries get made, or the mainstream rock media celebrate punk's birth, they're never there. And it's a ridiculous omission.

Though their brutal combination of wall-of-guitar thrash precision, hook-heavy, testosterone terrace chants and full-tilt, heartstring-tugging, East End, everyman, pub kitchen-sink dramas can be every bit as affecting as the best of Townshend, their faces never seemed to fit.

Malcolm McLaren pursued them in '77, but historically, the rarified metropolitan elite/aspirant middle-class wannabes of press and industry shied away. Cock Sparrer were too real, too punk, and never seemed quite as open to compromise as that nice chap from Sham 69.

Decca signed them, but didn't get punk to such an extent that they couldn't even market Adam's Ants, so Cock Sparrer barely maintained cult profile.

But they endured, inspired street punk along the way, and have just delivered a triumphal album that distils and defines all that's great about them.

Ian Fortnam

Dead Cross

Dead Cross *IPECAC*

Mike Patton's latest adventure makes an art of noise.

When SoCal punk-metal troupe Dead Cross found themselves without a singer in 2016, they turned to Mike Patton to take up the mantle. It was probably the best decision they've ever made. Patton is a man with a history of weaving art out of abject chaos, and his turn in Dead Cross is no different.

Their self-titled debut is a whirlwind of relentless, noisy experimentation. Ex-Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo's furious beats set the pace for a collection of songs that tear between alt.metal, hardcore punk and blistering thrash, often all in the space of a single track.

Patton swings between frenzied screeches, throaty growls and sinister spoken word, gracefully pulling songs back from the brink just as they threaten to unravel completely. You can pick out everything from Bad Brains to Bauhaus in the album's influences, not least in their cover of the latter's *Bela Lugosi's Dead*.

It's a bewildering collection, but one that becomes increasingly compelling with each listen. Just don't settle into it expecting an easy ride.

Briony Edwards

42 Decibel

Overloaded *STEAMHAMMER/SPV*

High-voltage rock'n'roll.

These Argentine AC/DC nuts certainly don't beat around the bush on this, their third album: by deliberately turning their equipment up to 11 and beyond, they've achieved the raw, distorted vibe of AC/DC's entire *Let There Be Rock* album. Nowhere is this more apparent than during the guitar solos on *Dangerous Mess*, *Cannon Fodder* and *Hot Shot*, where it's like listening to Angus in full flight.

Fortunately, the Young brothers aren't the only reference point – there's more than a bit of Rose Tattoo in opener *Whisky Joint* and *Half Face Dead*, all unhinged menace and raspy vocals.

Ultimately, though, what 42 Decibel lack are songs that match the more memorable efforts of their heroes.

Essi Berelian

Prong

Zero Days *STEAMHAMMER/SPV*

New York heroes expand their grimy legacy.

While some of the 80s thrash elite are slowing things down, leave it to Prong to buck all trends and keep the metal moving as fast as possible. With new recruit Art Cruz putting in a hell of a shift, pounding his drum kit into dust, the groove-laden riffs send your natural headbanging senses into overdrive.

The speedfreak crossover and aggro lyrics have long been the home of Tommy Victor, but the production on *Zero Days* makes it sound as fresh as the bands he's inspired. Sure, it's never going to be as life-affirming as *The Cleansing*, but there's still that trademark New York filth lining the edges, surrounding the more radio-friendly tracks that lack the dirt we all crave.

But when Prong swing, they go for a knockout, and for every polished palate cleanser, there's a savage hook waiting to punch your skin off.

Luke Morton

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Suicide Bombers: big, loud and pulsating.

Suicide Bombers

Suicide Idols *SELF-RELEASED*

Notorious Norwegian glam-slamming provocateurs return with another dose of teenage-backstage sex and outrage. Given their over-the-top moniker and bedraggled leather n' latex look, you'd have to be a serious fucking dummy to expect any kind of nuance here. This is straight-up, hot-pink, hair-to-the-heavens flash metal, delivered with all the subtlety of a Steve Stevens guitar solo or, like, the cover of that first Anthrax record.

The album is loaded with snarly uppercuts like *Ready For Tonight*, *Never Gonna Change* and *Just One Fuck* that combine the brooding melodicism of Hardcore Superstar or latter-day Backyard Babies with the arena rock heroics of Guns N' Roses or L.A. Guns or any combination thereof.

The Bombers are so big, loud and pulsating that there's no other modern-day glam outfit that can match them for attitude, swagger or sheer buzzsaw riffing, mascara-smeared decadence. It's not even fair, really. It's like bringing a confetti cannon to a knife fight. The Bombers ain't fakin' it, that's for sure.

Dukes Of Bordello

Lowdown 'N' Dirty

DEATH OR GLORY

With their thumping stand-up bass, swashbuckling guitar riffs and affection for Wildhearts-y, caffeine-bomb hooks, these noble Dukes deliver a tight array of greasy, knuckle-tattooed, all-hands-on-deck rock'n'roll that feels warm, familiar and intoxicating, like a half-empty bottle of wine you find under your bed after a lost weekend.

Baby Shakes

Turn It Up *SELF-RELEASED*

WWW.BABYSHAKES.COM

If you like Suzi Quatro and The Shangri-las and Coca-Cola straight from the bottle and roller-skating and crackly vinyl records and satin jackets and the Ramones and all-girl gangs and drag races and movies about googly-eyed monsters chasing teenagers across the beach, then holy smokes do I have the perfect album for you.

Control Freaks

Mindless Entertainment

SLOVENLY

Led by San Fran garage-punk sewerstar Greg Lowery (The Rip-offs, Supercharger, etc), Control Freaks play trashy rock'n'roll that's so perfectly and delightfully dumb that it's actually some kind of genius. If you hit The Donnas in the head with a shovel and then tossed them in the studio while they were still dizzy, this is pretty much what you'd get.

The Dirty Denims

Back With A Bang, Part 1

SELF-RELEASED THEDIRTYDENIMS.NL

Straight outta Eindhoven, the Dirty Denims are a blast of high-energy, high-velocity, handclappy, glam-stomping hard rock that reminds me of Rose Tattoo when they were still young and spry, and if Angry Anderson was a woman with a fearsome set of pipes. If rock'n'roll is dead, nobody told these cats. I hope they never get the memo.

Blackwater Conspiracy

Shootin' The Breeze *BULLETPROOF 20/20*

Northern Ireland's answer to the Black Crowes hit paydirt with their debut album.

The world has been waiting for a classic good-time rock'n'roll band ever since the Black Crowes abdicated the throne a few years ago. There have been countless contenders and pretenders, from Blackberry Smoke to former Crowes guitarist Rich Robinson's The Magpie Salute. But not one of them has managed to seize the crown yet.

Blackwater Conspiracy are the latest band with their eyes on the prize. This ain't the County Tyrone band's first rodeo – they peddled heads-down AC/DC-ish rock'n'roll under the name Million Dollar Reload until changing their name and sound literally halfway through a show a couple of years ago.

The new name isn't much better than the old one, but the music definitely is. Opening your album with a strutting, peacocking tune called *Blackwater Swagger* is a bold statement of intent. But it's *'85 Rock Star* that best encapsulates their manifesto, even if *'75 Rock Star* would be a more accurate title. *'Live fast, leave something beautiful,'* rasps singer Phil Conalane, like Chris Robinson doing his best Bon Scott impression.

Let's not be under any illusions: from its title down, there's not a shred of originality on *Shootin' The Breeze*. You can trace the low-slung guitars of *Monday Club* and *Roll The Dice* back to the Faces and *Exile*-era Stones, and the good-time piano that rinky-tinks its way through all 11 tracks hark back to every American barroom ever. And when Conalane rasps, *'It's like a four-leaf clover, it's like a perfect moon,'* or sings about shootin' the breeze until the morning sun on the title track, somewhere the Cliché Police are dropping their doughnuts and rushing to their squad cars.

But quality trumps originality every time, and Blackwater Conspiracy are nailed on in that department. The inferiority complex that kneecaps so many bands from this side of the Atlantic is nowhere to be heard: it takes brass balls to title a slow-burning mini-epic *President Joe* when the closest you come to America is watching repeats of *CSI: Miami* on Channel 5 USA. But then all the greatest rock'n'roll bands have never truly been about authenticity – just ask the Rolling Stones.

Of course, Blackwater Conspiracy have a long way to go before they touch the hem of the Stones' greatness. Hell, right now they're somewhere below the Counterfeit Stones in the pecking order. But you're unlikely to hear a better straight-ahead rock'n'roll record this year than *Shootin' The Breeze*, clichés be damned.

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Dave Everley

Big Big Train

The Second Brightest Star

ENGLISH ELECTRIC

The neo-prog veterans maintain a purple patch.

The latest name to try their hand at a 'secret' release, Big Big Train held back all news of this album's existence until dropping it quietly on the day of the summer solstice.

A mere two months after the critically acclaimed *Grimspound*, *The Second Brightest Star* is the prog-rock band's third record within a year. Indeed, had Big Big Train failed to deliver the goods with such admirable consistency then this follow-up might have looked foolish. It's probably best viewed as a companion to *Grimspound* and its predecessor *Folklore*, including as it does alternate, extended versions of some of those selections.

Mostly, though, these are new or previously unreleased songs. Its haunting title track and the fragrant, sun-kissed *Haymaking* are quite, quite beautiful. Indeed, notwithstanding the Swedes and an American in the line-up, nobody else does this type of bucolic, typically English music with as much charm or finesse.

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Dave Ling

Bloodclot

Up In Arms *METAL BLADE*

Alt.rock supergroup revisit thrash-punk roots.

The term 'supergroup' is oft pedalled and arguably overused when it comes to discussing the new projects of established musicians. But with Bloodclot, a composite of Cro-Mags, Danzig and QOTSA, among others, it might just hold some currency.

This album comes with just one request from frontman John Joseph: "Turn the volume way the fuck up." It doesn't take long to understand why. With *Manic*, a 140-second thrash-punk workout laced with Joseph's unhinged cries and yelps, and *Kill The Beast*'s screeching guitar solos plucked straight from the 80s, this is brazenly aggressive music for uncertain times.

Sure, it's not carving out any new ground musically, but that's not its intention. Instead, its spirit and sound are tied to revisiting the music – and frustrated energy – with which these musicians cut their teeth.

Though sometimes threatening to drift too far into well-worn meat-and-potatoes territory, this is a competent collection with plenty to keep punk rock fans entertained.

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Briony Edwards

Rex Brown

Smoke On This

STEAMHAMMER/SPV

Ex-Pantera bassist hoists the doobie high.

Rex Brown's debut solo album isn't what you'd expect from a former member of Pantera, but it is exactly what you'd expect from a 50-something good ole boy from Texas. Belying his fourth-banana-in-a-90s-metal-band status, *Smoke On This* is shit-kicking stoner rock with one eye on the glorious past.

The *Zep III*-ish *Buried Alive* and Floydian ambience of *The Best Of Me* suggest a man who first picked up a bong sometime around 1974 and hasn't put it down since, while epic closer *One Of These Days* is worth its weight in vintage denim.

Fans of his old band looking for spark-fingered histrionics or chest-thumping machismo will be disappointed – Brown was always the lukewarm water between the fire and ice of Phil Anselmo and Dimebag Darrell. But like a packhorse in an old western movie, *Smoke On This* does just what it needs to with the minimum of flash.

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Dave Everley

Kim Seviour

Recovery Is Learning

WHITE STAR

Former Touchstone singer steps out on her own.

As is befitting her place in the UK prog scene, Londoner Kim Seviour makes her solo debut with a concept album: *Recovery Is Learning* deals with her ongoing struggle with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (aka ME), and as such is clearly a deeply personal piece of work.

Seviour possesses the kind of dramatic, crystal-clear voice you'd find onstage in the theatres of London's West End, dripping with emotion and perfectly suited to the lush,

tasteful rock – forged in the Porcupine Tree mould – that envelops it. The waltzing title track in particular drives the narrative along, thanks to a passionate delivery.

There's hope at play too. *'I'm strong now,' she sings* on closing track *Morning Of The Soul*, before launching into a heartfelt spoken-word poem.

Despite being the end of the record, this is the moment that feels like a starting point for Seviour, and one she can grow and experiment from now she's laid the foundations.

Emma Johnston

Tangerine Dream

Particles INVISIBLE HANDS MUSIC

Electronic combo carry on in honour of Edgar Froese.

This double album comprises a studio disc and a live disc, both recorded following the death of Tangerine Dream's founder, Edgar Froese, in 2015. Thorsten Quaeschning is now the musical director of the band, with Ulrich Schnauss on keyboards and Hoshiko Yamane on violin and cello.

Side one's lengthy opener *4.00pm Session* is typical of later-period TD (circa 1980 onwards), when they went from so awesome to so-so, as their early dark ambient lapsed into a softer, melodic, sequencer-driven vein. The cover versions on the live disc emanate from that period as well, while titles such as *Power Of The Rainbow Serpent* are evidence of a lapse into new age reverie.

There is, however, a cover of the main theme to *Stranger Things*, itself avowedly influenced by Tangerine Dream, and whose caustic, menacing bursts of synth burst through the customary dully benign drones that hang elsewhere.

Meanwhile, a cover of *Rubycon* from 1975 is a healthy reminder of why Tangerine Dream, despite the lengthy and ongoing tail end to their career, have a vital historical role in the development of electronic music, projecting a chill, static awe that has never dated.

David Stubbs

Moby & The Void Pacific Choir

More Fast Songs About The Apocalypse

MUTE/LITTLE IDIOT

Second album from techno-rock star's post-punk project.

Who would pay hard cash for the 16th album by an increasingly irrelevant 51-year-old musician who refuses to tour? Nobody. Not my harsh judgement but the words of Moby himself, which helps explain why pop's most famous hardcore vegan launched this latest exercise in angst-fuelled electro-rock as a free download.

Building on the knowingly retro post-punk sonics of last year's *These Systems Are Failing*, these nine doom-heavy songs marry angular guitars with urgent machine beats and light-touch electronics. The vocals also have an authentically ragged, semi-sneering, new wave edge.

But for all his apocalyptic bleakness, Moby's electro-populist instincts remain active, lending a euphoric rush even to suicidally glum Joy Division-style confessionals like *Silence* and *All The Hurts We Made*.

Moby claims he makes albums purely for pleasure nowadays, and to vent his political despair. Perfectly valid reasons, even if the end result sometimes feels like watching an old man sobbing while having an angry wank. Which, frankly, I can get at home.

Stephen Dalton

Rancid

Trouble Maker EPITAPH

The long-serving Cali punks take it back to the old school.

For the past 20 years, Rancid have faced the same criticism with each album: "But it's not *...And Out Come The Wolves*." That album shaped what Rancid would become, and instilled a sound of American angst in a generation of punks from the US and beyond. Rancid's sound evolved over decades, but now, on their ninth record, the veterans have harnessed the past with 17 songs of ska-punk fury.

Clocking in at 37 minutes, it gallops along with no time-outs as Tim Armstrong's gravelly voice barks out choruses so infectious you'll still be singing along when 10 pints deep, which is Rancid's raison d'etre. They're the band we stand arm in arm with, swaying dangerously, screaming at the moon with our brothers and sisters until morning comes.

Unsurprisingly, gang vocals dominate proceedings, and there's an inherent swagger throughout, conjuring everything from the Bouncing Souls to The Clash. And while their lyrics aren't as pointed as Rise Against's latest, turned up loud it's impossible not to surrender yourself to the positive power of punk.

From the '*na-na-na*'s of *Telegraph Avenue* to the fist-in-the-air anthem *Make It Out Alive* and the arena-sized chorus of *Farewell Lola Blue*, this album is a solid reminder of what Rancid are capable of.

Luke Morton

The Isley Brothers & Santana

Power Of Peace LEGACY/SONY

A new millennium love-in.

Surely only a churl would baulk at the sentiments presented on the title of this pairing of titans whose reputations were forged in the heady days of the 1960s?

While the Isleys are in fine voice throughout, and Carlos Santana's mastery of his instrument remains as idiosyncratic as ever, your enjoyment of this collection of covers (and one new song) will rather depend on your relationship with the originals.

The winners prove to be the moments where the participants hold back on the bombast to groove. Billie Holliday's *God Bless This Child* is silky smooth. Elsewhere, Curtis Mayfield's *Gypsy Woman* perfectly fuses Santana's Latin tones with those celestial Isley voices. Best of all is Cindy Blackman Santana's original *I Remember*, that points to future possibilities.

Alas, Stevie Wonder's *Higher Ground* suffers from heavy-handedness, a fate that awaits *I Just Want To Make Love To You*.

Not quite a harvest for the world but no spoilt crops either.

Julian Marszalek

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Kryptonite: out of this world:

Kryptonite

Kryptonite FRONTIERS

Let's get the disclaimer out of the way: Kryptonite are yet another of those 'projects' assembled by a record company. In these impoverished days it's becoming a financial necessity for musicians to be in more than one band at a time and when Jakob Samuel, voice of The Poodles, met Alessandro Del Vecchio, in-house producer at Frontiers Records and a writer for the likes of Neal Schon, Fergie Frederiksen, Steve Lukather and many more, the result was inevitable.

Though the results of such collaborations can be iffy, Kryptonite – also featuring guitarist Michael Palace, bassist Pontus Egberg and drummer Robban Bäck – are striking: as glacial and imposing as their namesake alien mineral. Best exemplified by *Chasing Fire*, *Across The Water* and *Get Out Be Gone*, the music is slick and hook-laden, fusing the clean, modern-sounding sensibilities of today's Scandi-AOR acts with the timelessness of *1987*-era Whitesnake.

Whether or not Kryptonite will get to make a second record remains to be seen. On the evidence of this debut, though, such a prospect would be very welcome.

Rian

Out Of The Darkness

MELODICROCK

This Stockholm-based trio were able to use countryman The Murder Of My Sweet's Daniel Flores as the producer of their debut album. Flores brings a fairly robust style to everything that he touches, and despite Rian's obvious worship of 1980s hard rock, a muscular backbone underpins the likes of *Out Of My Mind* and *Time Of Your Life*.

World Trade

Unify FRONTIERS

Although two of their number went on to become members of Unruly Child, World Trade were always too proggy for the AOR fans, and too AOR for the prog rockers. Now back after an absence of more than two decades, this third album is largely insipid, bland and disastrously one-paced. The rather anaemic vocals of Billy Sherwood are a further handicap.

Kickin Valentina

Imaginary Creatures

MIGHTY MUSIC

Now onto a second album of thumping yet tuneful hard rock, Atlanta four-piece Kickin Valentina like to believe they're creating their own genre. The truth is that *Imaginary Creatures* fuses together elements of rock'n'roll, hair metal, melodic rock and sleaze, though there's no doubting the band's commitment – or their quality.

Snow

At Last... ESCAPE MUSIC

Great white hopes of the Sunset Strip from 1978 to '81, Snow got back together several years back, and now feature the Cavazo brothers Carlos (later of Quiet Riot and Ratt) and Tony (Hurricane). Despite being 30 years old, the kick-ass hard rockers that comprise *At Last...* have aged surprisingly well. As a bonus, initial quantities of the album come bundled with a live CD.

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

Marillion with Fish (centre) hit their peak with 1985's *Misplaced Childhood*.

Marillion

Misplaced Childhood PARLOPHONE

The album that rebooted prog, now remastered, blossoms in adulthood.

Mid-80s Marillion: a religion to fans, a punchline to others. They were deemed so unfashionable in the era of The Smiths, the Mary Chain and The Cure that those who'd seen the light were only galvanized by the opprobrium.

To hear *Misplaced Childhood* – the band's masterpiece and biggest seller – now, out of context, liberated from playground peer pressure, is to recognise a truly great concept album. It's one that believes 41 minutes of rock music can – like a film or book – aim for the stars and present a story full of emotion, poetry and, above all, drama. It's way stronger than more revered milestones like, say, *Quadrophenia* (which it references with a cheeky *'rain on me'*), where for your handful of peak moments you have to wade through loads of undisciplined musical waffle. And the misconception that prog is all about indulgent jamming and noodling? There's zero fat here. Everything lasts exactly as long as feels right.

As the leader of the neo-prog pack, it's lean, slick and makes every punch count. Produced by Chris Kimsey, who'd honed his skills with the Stones and had more recently delivered Killing Joke's most powerful and palatable album *Night Time*, it's a textbook example of how to get a group's individual voice across without either diluting them or alienating the general listener. It sounds delicious, recorded as it was at Berlin's Hansa Tonstodio. All things considered, it's a wonder it was ever so uncool in '85.

It's still almost impossible to convert sceptics though. One trick to whet appetites is to declare that if *Sweet Thing/Candidate* from *Diamond Dogs* was a whole album, it'd pan out like this.

Marillion back then were compared to Gabriel-era Genesis, even if they thought they were just as inspired by The Who. Again, though, *Misplaced Childhood* is never frilly rock opera. It builds, flows, makes its own sense. When there are linked tracks, repeated motifs or instrumental passages, they contribute to the whole. If Genesis had been making it up as they went along, Marillion were in the lucky position of possessing the map they'd handed down. There are climaxes, breathers, more climaxes. It's a design classic.

They'd limbered up with *Script For A Jester's Tear* and *Fugazi*, neither of which were shy of histrionic melodrama, but the focus is sharper here. Fish gives a cavalcade of confessionals that might seem like a case of too much information, but hey, let's say he foresaw presciently the selfie age. He barks of lost love and idealism, the pressures of success and, ultimately acceptance, mirrored in the music's rousing final upswing. It's not unlike out-takes from the 70s David Essex movie *Stardust* come to life. Fish's diary details – the references to Edinburgh and his own relationships, like the composite that is *Kayleigh* – are so intimate that, counter-intuitively, they reach Everyman status.

After the finely wrought love pangs of crossover hits *Kayleigh* and *Lavender*, *Bitter Suite* (in five concise sections) takes us to the heart of the self-pity. *Heart Of Lothian* cracks a window and lets the air in. We're led inexorably forward to *Blind Curve*, the next multi-part mini-symphony. Fish may be wrestling with his demons, but Steve Rothery's guitar and Mark Kelly's keyboards are giving him shoulder rubs.

> **'It presents a story full of emotion, poetry and drama.'**

Prog is often criticised for lacking restraint, but this floats on exemplary taste. As the streamlined suspense reaches resolution, we're lifted up by the double whammy of not one but two climactic anthems in *Childhoods End?* and *White Feather*. Imagine *See Me Feel Me* with more than one idea and a fire in its eyes.

Fish claims to have written the lyrics during a 10-hour acid trip, in which case it's bewildering how well it all hangs together. One must credit Kimsey and the band with their careful oversight – as remastering jobs go, Steven Wilson can rarely have sat down at a cleaner desk. This four-disc/Blu-ray deluxe box set gives us the album, then two discs of a previously unreleased Utrecht live concert (including this album played in sequence), plus demos and B-sides. As ever, Wilson plays his hand perfectly, but this time he's been dealt a royal flush.

As Fish howls of obscure poets, primordial phantoms, train drivers necking cans of lager, love songs with no validity and children drenched in napalm, his cry of *'I can't take any more'* recalls Peter Finch in the Sidney Lumet film *Network*, refracted through Thomas Jerome Newton.

The monumental *Misplaced Childhood* should be found again.

Chris Roberts

The Inmates

The Albums 1979-82

LEMON RECORDINGS

Three hard shots of rhythm and blues.

The Inmates rocked. That's all you need to know, really. 'Maximum R&B' is what it was once called, and that's what these mean, lean London pub rockers played: blues-fuelled R&B, stripped back to the bare essentials.

This music was all about the riff. If the riff wasn't there, the song was nothing. Think Dr. Feelgood, think Eddie & The Hot Rods (whom the Inmates later shared a singer with, when original shouter Bill Hurley became ill). It's the kind of music you don't want to meet down a dark alley.

The first three 'classic' albums, from before Hurley's illness, are represented here – 1979's *First Offence*, which spawned the near-monster hits *The Walk* and a blistering cover of The Standells' *Dirty Water*; 1980's poppier but still brooding *Shot In The Dark;* and 1981's 'eclectic' *Heatwave In Alaska*.

With bonus tracks aplenty, this is brutal, beautiful music – the sort of songs made for those who felt the Stones peaked the day they stopped cramming their albums with blues covers.

Narrow ties, scuzzy suits, sharp shoes. The first album is dirty, raw, the latter two albums show some Stiff Records/Nick Lowe influence. The Inmates: men getting down to men business. Sweet.

Everett True

Psychic TV

Reissues SACRED BONES

Reissues of Genesis P-Orridge's post-Throbbing Gristle outfit.

Initially revolving around the core of Genesis P-Orridge and Alternative TV's Alex 'no, not that one' Fergusson, Psychic TV moved away from the sonic extremism of Throbbing Gristle in a more song structured direction, although deeply subversive intentions always lurked at their core.

Pagan Day feels like an attempt to revisit the strange gardens of the late 1960s, not very fashionable in 1984 – a lo-fi, bucolic, hazily psychedelic cover of Pearls Before Swine's *Translucent Carriages* particularly feels like it's channeling the spirit of Syd Barrett. These are winsomely fragile, tentative affairs, which would later evolve in a live setting. *Baby's Gone Away*, which sounds like a Velvet Underground pastiche, is here sketched on guitar and organ, demo-style.

By the time of 1988's *Allegory And Self*, neo-psychedelia was increasingly the rage. *Godstar* celebrates the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones, whose death in 1969 makes him a symbol of a decade forever gone, a creature of a spirit world. Elsewhere, on *She Was Surprised* and *Ballet Disco*, Psychic TV venture tentatively into the reams of acid-style electronics, as if to note that the times were coming full circle and an old English counterculture was rising again.

Both

David Stubbs

Echo & The Bunnymen

The Killing Moon: Singles

RHINO

All the 'hits' and more.

For many people, there's always a sense of regret and relief with Echo & The Bunnymen's career: regret that they never became as big as their contemporaries U2, and relief that they never became as big as their contemporaries U2.

Despite their apparent stadium-worthiness (and attempts to radio-befriend their sound), the Bunnymen were just a bit too cool and weird to become arena dullards, with Ian McCulloch also being unusually lippy in more than one way.

This new single compilation confirms the brilliance of the Bunnymen at every stage of their career. Unusually, it even contains *Enlighten Me* from their Mac-less period, as well as early flop *The Puppet*, while missing out *Lips Like Sugar* and Zoo debut *Pictures On My Wall*.

It ranges from the epic title track to the twisty *Rescue*, through the cloning of *People Are Strange* and the college dancefloor hit *Bring On The Dancing Horses*.

It feels a bit scattershot as a compilation, but then Echo & The Bunnymen left consistency to their flag-waving peers, and were all the better for it.

An entry-level compilation, but a good one.

David Quantick

10CC

Before, During, After: The Story Of 10cc *UMC*

Roots-and-branches box-set covering the entire 10cc sprawl.

The original lifespan of 10cc was always just one act of a far grander, more experimental production. It's impossible to tell their whole story without their compilations including the early-80s successes of Godley & Creme and Wax alongside 10cc standards. So here, finally, is what we could call an all-encompassing 10cc: Director's Cut.

This boxed Story Of 10cc is actually ordered During, After and Before. CD1 is the 70s greatest hits compilation we're all familiar with, following their development from 1972's glam parodists and helium doo-woppers of *Rubber Bullets* and *Donna*, through the sophisticated art-pop masters of *I'm Mandy Fly Me, Art For Art's Sake* and *I'm Not In Love*, to their catchy/corny later hits – *Good Morning Judge, The Things We Do For Love* and *Dreadlock Holiday*. It encapsulates their core songwriting panache, storytelling nous and Pythonesque pastiche bent – see how *Silly Love* twists from T.Rex glam riffs into a 20s show tune.

But for its origin story we should first consider CD4, The Early Years, crammed with revealing formative curiosities. Eric Stewart tootles through *A Groovy Kind Of Love* with The Mindbenders in 1969, while Gouldman is a back-room songwriter writing proto-prog pop hits (*Bus Stop, No Milk Today*) for The Hollies and Herman's Hermits. Ultimately the four-piece come together to hone their genre-hopping skills by backing both Neil Sedaka and Floyd-folk man-mod Rameses, and thumping frivolities like *Neanderthal Man* as Hotlegs.

The tale gets tangled further on CD3, a truncated version of 2003's *Strawberry Bubblegum* compilation of tracks largely recorded to order, under a plethora of aliases. A quick-change costume box of country, pastoral soul, quasi-reggae, psych folk, hippie gospel, and falsetto glitterband covers of *Da Doo Ron Ron*, this was the breeding ground of 10cc's eclectic mischief.

Most fascinating is CD2 – Post 10cc, summarising what happened when these four spinning tops of ideas, freed from the band, ricocheted off into the 80s and beyond. Godley & Creme best cornered 10cc's art of narrative pop on *Wedding Bells* and *Under Your Thumb* and the glorious *Cry*. Goulding took to 80s pop like a horn-blasted hero on Wax's *Building A Bridge To Your Heart*, and only Stewart slipped into past-its-sell-by-date prog on *The Ritual Parts 1-2-3* before redeeming himself on Paul McCartney's *Pretty Little Head*. Lol Creme took such electronic adventurism further, dabbling in trip-hop with Art Of Noise and space soul with Trevor Horn's The Producers, but they all remained restless explorers, brimming with inspiration.

Mark Beaumont

The Rolling Stones

Reissues *EAGLE*

Got live if you still want it.

With the Stones hitting Europe this autumn, Eagle are releasing the audio to three live DVDs as albums in their own right. *Ladies & Gentlemen The Rolling Stones* (**7/10**) catches the Taylor line-up chopping out *Exile* songs on 1972's infamous S.T.P. tour. Its inconsistent sound is due to being constructed from two shows apiece in Fort Worth and Houston, but it provides a worthy document of the Stones' early-70s peak (though let down by skimpy annotation).

The Stones returned to Fort Worth's Will Rogers Memorial Center for *Some Girls Live In Texas '78* (**7/10**), Keith rousing from his numbed-out heroin years and locking with new boy Woody to drive the band with such energised thrust that it sometimes threatens to derail Charlie. Better notes offer eyewitness memories and memorabilia.

Checkerboard Lounge: Live In Chicago 1981 (**8/10**) is the priceless killer. It was recorded when the Stones' 1981 US jaunt hit Chicago for three arena shows, and Jagger, Richards, Wood and Ian Stewart ventured to Bronzeville niterie the Checkerboard Lounge to jam with long-time hero Muddy Waters on their night off. It's fascinating, even cockles-warming, hearing them pile into *Baby Please Don't Go* and *Hoochie Coochie Man* with their original inspiration (shortly before he was diagnosed with lung cancer).

Ultimately, these are three uncut diamonds for diehards.

Kris Needs

Samson

Joint Forces: 1986-1993

HNE RECORDINGS

A mixed bag from the NWOBHM pioneers.

When guitarist Paul Samson died on August 9, 2002, he left a complicated back catalogue. This two-CD set brings together three albums from a particularly muddled period (following three albums with Bruce Dickinson and two featuring Nicky Moore) of solo work and stylistic switches.

The first, and best, is 1986's *Joint Forces* (**6/10**), here as remixed by Paul in 1993. Initially intended as a solo album, it was released under the Samson banner because it once again featured the stunning blues tones of Moore and, despite its conception, sounded like a continuation of Samson's most commercially successful era.

The personnel had changed, though, with a new rhythm section including ex-Gillan bassist John McCoy. There are backing vocals by Rock Goddess, whose Jody Turner also shares lead vocals on the excellent *Tramp*, and the album fairly rocks along before the big ballad finale (featuring Colin Towns on piano) called *Reach Out To Love.*

Two years later, though, a completely new, would-be radio-friendly band featuring Mick White on vocals cut *1988* (**4/10**). Awkwardly, the album straddles these two discs and *The Silver Screen* and *Good To See You* aside, its keyboard-laced sound hasn't dated well, trying too hard to impress a slicker, MTV-dominated world.

On *Nineteen Ninety-Three* (**5/10**) Paul reverted to a three-piece (with Chris Aylmer on bass), singing lead vocals himself. The songs are far from innovative but at least represent a fine guitarist following his heart – and his love of Hendrix, Mountain and ZZ Top – and sounding all the stronger for it.

Neil Jeffries

Paradise Lost

One Second *MUSIC FOR NATIONS*

When the Lost went goth.

Without question Paradise Lost's most controversial album, it's hard to believe this is the same band who released *Draconian Times* or *The Plague Within* as they eschewed all sense of heaviness and went for a more electronic, gothic tone. As such, many diehards still find it tough to stomach. But listening to the album now, one has to say it's breathtaking.

Everything here is convincing. The songwriting is of the highest value, while the performances offer depth and class, with Nick Holmes showing he's a vocalist who can do a lot more than growl menacingly.

Opening with the title track and continuing into *Say Just Words*, these are songs that breathe with intelligence and a different type of darkness to what we'd become used to with this lot. Making such a musical

GETTY

swerve gave the band a freedom they'd perhaps lost through being stuck in the doom mould.

Each song is well crafted without ever giving the impression that it had been overcooked, and you know the band enjoyed the experience of getting away from any formula.

The addition of a live recording from 1998 adds more value, but in the end, *One Second* stands proudly on its own merits.

Malcolm Dome

Nick Lowe

Reissues *YEP ROC*

Love the sounds, heartbreaking class.

Ever the one for a pithy, self-deprecating put-down, Lowe himself has described his post-Rockpile 80s output as "the wilderness years". And while none of these six reissues can lay claim to be cherished masterpieces like *Jesus Of Cool* or, in more recent times, *The Convincer*, each one is a healthy trough of pop worth dipping into again.

Nick The Knife and *The Abominable Showman* (both **6/10**) are scattergun affairs whose shortcomings are overshadowed by great charm (*My Heart Hurts, Time Wounds All Heels*). However, *… And His Cowboy Outfit* (**8/10**) finds The Artist Formerly Known As Basher in full possession of his faux Fabs faculties on *Half A Boy And Half A Man*. Bonus tracks are few and far between across all six discs, but here the swaggering cover of Leroy Van Dyke's *Walk On By* is an early pointer to the elder statesman country gent of Lowe's most recent recordings.

He revisits *I Knew The Bride* (a hit for Rockpile mucker Dave Edmunds) with panache on *The Rose Of England* **(8/10)**, although it's the album's title track that stands out, an evocative modern-day folk song Richard Thompson would have eaten his beret to have written. *Pinker And Prouder Thank Previous* (**7/10**) is frustratingly haphazard, largely salvaged by previously unheard songs from the pens of John Hiatt and Graham Parker.

But it's Lowe's own eloquent writing that stirs the soul on *Party Of One* (**8/10**), his wit in full flight on *Jumbo Ark* and *All Men Are Liars*. Pick of the bunch, though, is the country shuffle mournfulness of *What's Shakin' On The Hill*, a paean to outsiders that pretty much defines Nick's own place in the pop firmament.

Terry Staunton

Paul Kantner & The Windowpane Collective

Venusian Love Songs

FLOATING WORLD

You can take the hippie out of folk…

After a lifetime of psychedelics and sci-fi that included a decade as one half of West Coast rock's most regal couple, Paul Kantner's overactive brain was getting addled by the start of the 21st century. He didn't appear to have made many pension arrangements either, which is probably why he came up with various projects like this when he wasn't appropriating the 'Airplane', 'Starship' or 'Jefferson' monikers, in defiance of agreements with his former bandmates.

The Windowpane Collective included his old friend David Freiberg, two of the girls he recruited to impersonate Grace Slick, his old folkie friend Jack Traylor, and even a rare appearance from the West Coast's very own Cheshire Cat ('Now you see him, now you don't') Marty Balin.

Whether this 2011 selection of love songs curated by Kantner makes more sense on Venus than Earth is hard to know. Maybe the Venusians appreciate cheap and cheerful covers of Van Morrison's *Crazy Love* followed by Heart's *Crazy On You*. They may baulk at Freiberg singing *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face*, though Kantner's folk-inspired versions of his own *Today* and *Martha* plus Dylan's *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right* should please his fans on both planets.

Hugh Fielder

The Velvet Underground

Velvet Underground & Nico *UME*

50th-anniversary vinyl edition of alternative rock landmark.

Over the past half century, they've sold it to us in ever more expanded editions across a variety of formats, some now as profoundly dead as 'death to disco', before ultimately settling on this: 11 tracks on 12 inches of black vinyl with a big old banana on the front. £28.99. Really? Or you could get a limited-edition pink vinyl version. It sold out of its 1,000 copies almost immediately, of course, but luckily there are plenty on eBay making stupid money already. It's almost incredible how many of these ended up as unwanted birthday presents for cynical money-grabbing bastards.

Anyway, if you need to know what the album's like, firstly, welcome to our planet; secondly, it's a work of towering genius, influential every which way and still astonishing in its breadth of emotional impact.

It's the record that slapped pop out of a simpering rosie-cheeked childhood into delinquent rock adolescence. As 1967's West Coast offered flowers, jangles and a doobie, the East Coast's Velvets countered with S&M, feedback and smack.

Lou Reed's nihilistic punk cynicism sought to choke the hippies' Nutopian optimism at birth, and this album was its glorious garrotte.

Ian Fortnam

Kiss

Kissworld – The Best Of Kiss *UNIVERSAL*

Another two-disc selection of random Kiss klassics and kurios for your kollection.

True story. The mother-in-law is a massive Frank Sinatra fan. So when visiting the other day, we brought along the Amazon Echo and commanded: "Alexa, play some Frankie-boy for Nancy." And lo, the stentorian tones of Sinatra issued from the voice-controlled personal assistant thingy and the mother-in-law was very happy indeed. After about half an hour, we decided to pull a prank and issued a second command: "Alexa, play some Kiss." And – no word of a lie – up popped *My Way*, a track from the band's 1987 album *Crazy Nights*.

This goes to prove three things. One, artificial intelligence has a hitherto unheralded wry sense of humour. Two, AI might be more adept at collating an album such as this than a faceless record company suit looking bewildered in front of a Kiss dartboard. Three, the previous point is academic anyway, because advances in technology, not to mention streaming, shuffling and all manner of other options, make the idea of releasing a compilation record in 2017 firmly redundant. Why listen to someone else's playlist when you can compile your own?

And we have no doubt there will come a day when we will be able to refine our requests still further and say something like: "Alexa, play some tracks from when Mark St John was guitarist in Kiss, but not *Burn Bitch Burn* because that's rubbish."

So to the matter at hand. Whaddya need to know? This is a Kiss album containing 20 songs by Kiss. Old ones, new ones, loved ones, neglected ones. The track selection is the very definition on the word 'scattergun' – there's no rhyme or reason or logic to it all. Indeed, parallels can be made to watching the FA Cup draw on TV: "My word, it's a clash of the titans between *Rock And Roll All Nite* and *Detroit Rock City*, and minnows *Hard Luck Woman* will have their work cut out against *Calling Dr Love*."

Random observations: it's good to see contemporary ditties *Modern Day Delilah* and *Hell Or Hallelujah* holding their own against the classics, while the lack of Ace Frehley-led songs is disappointing. Our advice? If you're seriously in the market for a Kiss komp, try *Double Platinum* (1978), *Smashes, Thrashes & Hits* (1988) or even *Best Of Solo Albums* (1979). Better still, why not re-purchase the band's entire back catalogue? Go on. You know Gene wants you to.

Geoff Barton

GETTY

Prince

Purple Rain Deluxe NPG/WARNER

Priapic perv-pop pioneer at the peak of his purple-headed powers.

A maximalist magnum opus that's sold 25 million copies and counting, *Purple Rain* catapulted Prince into the immortal pop pantheon with its audacious blend of machine-tooled sex-funk, heavy metal guitars, porno-suggestive lyrics and MTV-friendly, high-gloss showmanship. The accompanying film may have been a polished turd of soapy melodrama but it transformed its diminutive star into a towering icon of the video age.

Remastered in 2015, the original 1984 album still sounds gloriously eclectic and mostly electrifying. From the skeletal robo-funk and Hendrix-oid guitar eruptions of *When Doves Cry* to the controversial, overblown perv-pop wank fantasy *Darling Nikki* and the epic blow-out finale of *Purple Rain* itself, this is Prince in his imperial pomp, cranking everything up to 11 with his tongue in both cheeks. Usually somebody else's.

Prince's untimely death last year led to feverish speculation about opening up his legendary archive of shelved recordings, and this expanded reissue package certainly delivers in that regard. Can you guess what most of the ultra-rare and previously unreleased tracks are about? As a subtle clue, one is titled *We Can Fuck*, a prototype for the George Clinton duet later renamed *We Can Funk*. It's a walloping drum-machine groove marathon, but fairly routine by Prince's standards.

More interesting is *Electric Intercourse*. Bumped from the original album, it's a salaciously syrupy, slow-burn seduction ballad. And *Wonderful Ass* is just fabulous: a playfully hilarious paean to devotional rear-end worship. It was reportedly written for alt.rockers Violent Femmes, who rejected it as too risqué. Wisely, perhaps, since Prince radiated a unique force field of sex-god charisma that mostly shielded him from accusations of sexism.

Another luscious curio is *Our Destiny/ Roadhouse Garden*, part Broadway show tune and part disco-sleek groove. Heard only fleetingly in the film, *Possessed* is an agreeably angular blast of new wave electro-funk, while the ambient instrumental *Father's Song*, written by Prince's jazz pianist dad John Nelson, is a sublime sci-fi lullaby.

Inevitably, some of the bonus tracks are duds. *The Dance Electric* is the kind of boxy, Huey Lewis-style synth-funk jam that Prince could churn out in his sleep, while *Velvet Kitty Cat* and *Katrina's Paper Dolls* are twee, lightweight sketches. But overall, the extra material makes *Purple Rain* a richer, deeper, stranger and ruder album. Fifty shades of purple, most of them delicious.

Stephen Dalton

Emerson Lake & Palmer

Reissues BMG

ELP me if you can, I'm feeling down…

The punk-rock wars of the mid-1970s ruined no band more than Emerson Lake & Palmer. Johnny Rotten might have been a secret Peter Hammill fan but he despised the bloated antics of ELP and wished them dead.

Keith and co knew they were beaten. They sold their mansions and retreated to semi-detacheds in Cricklewood. The show that never ends, er, ended – at least temporarily.

Regrouping in 1991, the original trio released *Black Moon* (**6/10**) the following year. Fans hoping for a quadruple concept album about the antics of a monster truck-cum-octopus were bitterly disappointed by its, well, ordinariness. The comeback begins well enough with the ominous title track but then tapers off alarmingly. Greg Lake's blubbering sentimentality is intact on songs such as *Affairs Of The Heart* and *Footprints In The Snow*, but attempts to recreate the pomp and ceremony of the past are surprisingly muted.

The same criticisms apply to 1994's *In The Hot Seat* (**5/10**). More electric chair than Magnus Magnusson, it's a drab, low-key affair, Emerson and Lake's in-studio loggerhead antics taking their toll. Where there were once deadly daggers there were now blunt butter knives, and that was no good at all.

Geoff Barton

The Grateful Dead

Long Strange Trip: Motion Picture Soundtrack

GRATEFUL DEAD/RHINO

Wide-angled overview of an expansive career.

Never knowingly under-represented with regards to output, both studio and live, this double-CD set (three if you plump for the Amazon exclusive) accompanies the recent six-part, four-hour documentary: the length of an average gig. Eschewing another greatest hits or yet-more-live-rarities approach, it pulls back the focus with a cherry-picked career overview.

Collated and produced by filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev and band archivist David Lemieux, it's a perfectly judged collection brimming with exquisite performances. The unreleased 23-minute live version of *Dark Star* from the Fillmore East, 1970, is the carrot dangling over your average bootleg-hoarding Deadhead's head, along with a sublime *Dear Mr Fantasy/ Hey Jude* from Foxboro, 1989.

Studio high spots *Uncle John's Band*, *Candyman* and *Ripple* provide some crisp and compact ballast to the live meanderings, and it's a waste of time to quibble about sins of inclusion and omission in a planet-sized canon. As if.

Other highlights include the MTV-leveraged Dire Straits-esque *Touch Of Grey* and the poignant *'Fare you well…'* of album closer *Brokedown Palace*.

The real gold, however, is the trad/Rev. Gary Davis cover *Death Don't Have No Mercy* from Fillmore West, 1969. An emotional and scuffed blues workout, it retrospectively illustrates where the band came from and where they were heading: that long, strange trip.

Tim Batcup

Lee Brilleaux

Rock 'N' Roll Gentleman

RHINO

Brilleaux padding.

The name of this band is Dr Feelgood. Lee Brilleaux was their singer from their early-70s Canvey Island beginnings to their demise in 1994 after his death. And this four-CD anthology takes it's title from a recent book about the gentleman. So hey.

Like all the best groups, Dr Feelgood were more than the sum of their parts. For the first few years, they were nearly twice that as guitarist Wilko Johnson cannoned off Brilleaux, with his urgent vocals, matching harmonica and a driving rhythm section. The eight tracks from their 1975 debut *Down By The Jetty* show their uncompromising stance in mono.

Malpractice later that year plundered the R&B catalogue that had inspired the Stones and their ilk a decade earlier. It all came together on 1976's live *Stupidity*, which for many remains the band's peak, highlighted by the title track and Johnson's *Back In The Night*. But temperamental differences were driving Brilleaux and Johnson apart and after 1977's *Sneakin' Suspicion*, Johnson split.

So that's the first CD and

LARRY WILLIAMS/PRESS

there's no way the other three can compete. After a shaky start, new guitarist John Mayo settles in and enjoys the radio-friendly renaissance producer Richard Gottehrer brought on 1978's *Private Practice* album. But they weren't made for the 80s and by the start of the third disc, Mayo is gone and the band are struggling.

After the rhythm section quit, Brilleaux got back to what he knew best on 1984's *Doctors Orders* and they're almost full circle by the fourth disc, which ends with Brilleaux's final gig.

Hugh Fielder

Fairport Convention

Come All Ye: The First Ten Years UMC

Seven discs celebrate folk rockers 50th.

There are 55 unreleased tracks here to tempt owners of the many previous Fairport box sets, and 2010's *Sandy Denny* monument. What becomes clear, as Denny wanders in and out of the picture, is how she and Fairport defined each other.

Though 1969's *Liege & Lief* was the template for English folk rock, *Unhalfbricking*, released six months before, finds the band's own material at its best. Thompson's delicately mournful, observational mood piece *Genesis Hall* is bettered by an alternative take of Denny's cool dissection of a dead relationship, *Autopsy*. With a funk pulse veering near bossa nova, its gauzy substance and organic shifts in tone and rhythm are a miraculous group moment worthy of Fairport's idols The Band.

A version of Dylan's *Percy's Song*, meanwhile, finds Denny at her piercing, humane best, evincing the song's sad stand against injustice and gorgeous melody. 1970's live *Sloth* includes a wailing Thompson solo, before he followed Denny to the exit.

The 19th-century concept album *Babbacombe Lee* was a spirited response to life without Fairport's most charismatic talents. 1973's *Rosie*, though, was sterile country rock, and the later discs, heavy on unreleased oddments, are a bumpy ride.

Latter-day Fairporter Trevor Lucas, also Denny's husband, helped lure her back for *Live Convention* (1974) and *Rising For The Moon* (1975). The full, beautiful ache of *White Dress* finds her undimmed.

Fairport's greatest importance is popularising a tremendous folk repertoire. Their greatest music, though, serves to catalyse Sandy Denny's otherwise wayward genius.

Nick Hasted

Glenn Hughes

Reissues HNE/PURPLE

Ex-Deep Purple legend's clean-livin' 90s albums.

Glenn Hughes had The KLF to thank for saving his life. At least that's what he said after the techno duo asked him to provide vocals on 1992's monster hit, *America: What Time Is Love?*. It was the first project Hughes had undertaken since finally kicking the addictions that had undermined his creative life over the past couple of decades.

Free of booze and drugs, he resumed his solo career later that year, though it wasn't until 1995, arguably, that he truly regained his stride with *Feel* (**7/10**). The album sounds like a belated companion to his immediate post-Purple debut, 1977's *Play Me Out*, which drew from his beloved soul and R&B.

Not everything works, with Hughes and his band (including old mate Pat Thrall on guitar/keyboards and a cameo from ex-Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum) tending to excel when cranking up the funk riffs on *Redline* or riding the heavy grooves of *Coffee & Vanilla*.

The self-explanatory *Addiction* (**6/10**) landed 12 months later, with Hughes expunging his demons over much harder, guitar-centric terrain that would please the metalheads alienated by his more melodic detours. A somewhat patchy set is ultimately saved by the acrobatic leaps and turns of his remarkably resilient voice.

Rob Hughes

Third Eye Blind

Third Eye Blind RHINO

Mega-selling debut gets the anniversary treatment.

Having gigged around San Francisco for three years, Third Eye Blind caught a break when they opened for Oasis in 1996. Liam Gallagher told them they were shit, but record executives were more enamoured, leading to a bidding war that saw the quartet sign a lucrative deal with Elektra for their self-titled debut a year later.

It's easy to understand the appeal. Third Eye Blind provided a link between alt.rock and mainstream USA, smuggling dark themes – addiction, suicide, abuse – into punchy grunge-pop tunes with big hooks. Nothing exemplified this better than *Semi-Charmed Life*, a tale of crystal meth dependency (singer and chief songwriter Stephan Jenkins called it their *Walk On The Wild Side*) that breezes in on a battery of power chords.

Most of the other songs were cut from the same cloth – *Graduate*, *Losing A Whole Year*, *Good For You* – giving the album a homogenous sound somewhere between Green Day and an angrier Busted. The UK remained largely impervious to the band's charms, though five hit singles helped it go six-times platinum in the States.

This expanded reissue comes with an extra disc of demos and rarities, including a pretty superfluous cover of Velvet Underground's *Heroin*.

Rob Hughes

The Allman Brothers Band

Hell & High Water: The Best Of The Arista Years FLOATING WORLD/RETROWORLD

Best of the Brothers' worst.

Gregg Allman in his 80s doldrums.

Now the Brotherhood is done, Gregg Allman's death putting the seal on their 2014 retirement, this 1994 trawl through the Allmans' two-album Arista stay – *Reach For The Sky* (1980) and *Brothers Of The Road* (1981) – definitely isn't the best way to remember him. Allman was a broken man in the early 80s, hollowed out by brother Duane's death and numbing quantities of drink and drugs, his songwriting well dry.

Since the band's 1979 reunion, country-loving guitarist Dickey Betts had captained the ship. Adding to the warning signs, the band arrived at Arista with its hands-on boss Clive Davis in his pomp, having just guided The Kinks to renewed stardom with a more contemporary sound. The Allmans were booked in for a similar makeover by Nashville songwriting-production team Mike Lawler and Johnny Cobb.

Anyone with happy memories of Duane's ecstatic, soulful improvisation, or the band's dignified latter-day return with Warren Haynes should look away now.

Reach For The Sky starts promisingly, Allman's organ blending with gospel singers on *Hell & High Water*, but he's barely there as an instrumentalist thereafter. The general honky-tonk flavour becomes overpowering on Betts' *I Got A Right To Be Wrong*, the sort of anaemically ornery country stomper 80s Nashville turned out by the yard. The instrumental *From The Madness Of The West* pales beside previous epics. Elsewhere, the tendency to chop any sign of the band starting to motor is album-long. Betts' slide guitar on *Famous Last Words* gets an especially criminal fade-out.

Brothers Of The Road sees Allman partially revive, providing the only tracks here you might possibly need. *Leavin'* is a rough blues sung with gravelly conviction. *Never Knew How Much (I Needed You)* similarly draws on his own decline. The Arista machine (Styx producer John Ryan this time) tack on big choruses and a distinctly unwelcome sax solo. But the languid, conversational drawl of the verses and their lyrics' bitter confession are a flicker of the real thing. Anyway, the indignity of trying to make it in the 80s became too much and the Allmans split again.

Nick Hasted

REX

The Ramones

Leave Home: 40th Anniversary Deluxe Edition *RHINO*

Their glorious second album, now with previously unheard trimmings and still housed in the sleeve blamed for its downfall.

While 1976's epoch-making *Ramones* was a tough act to follow, *Leave Home* saw the band mature as songwriters, accelerate tempos and ascend from scuffling monochrome into glorious living colour as they finally captured their live power. That said, former manager Danny Fields blames the "awful" fashion shoot-style cover for the album's relative chart failure and lingering status as "least loved of all the first four albums". The title refers to the Ramones' venturing beyond their Bowery stamping ground to America's gig circuit and the UK.

Determined to improve on the first album's somewhat flat sound, Tommy Ramone decided to produce the band himself, joined at Sire Records' insistence by Tony Bongiovi. With tight discipline imposed by Tommy and taskmaster Johnny, the Ramones entered New York's Sundragon studio in October 1976 and recorded their next brace of songs, completing backing tracks in two days, then spending five more on overdubs and Joey's vocals.

When *Leave Home* was released in January 1977, it transcended the first album's promise and reimagined rock'n'roll as pop perfection with future classics such as *Commando, Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment, Suzy Is A Headbanger, You're Gonna Kill That Girl* and outsider anthem *Pinhead* (inspired by Todd Browning's 1932 cult movie *Freaks*).

Only here is the notion presented that band and associates were disappointed with the mix. It sounded glorious on a regular stereo but in his liner notes, session engineer Ed Stasium says it was rushed, and he even supplies a new mix aimed at restoring the full force of Johnny's guitar.

Stasium's new take is joined by remastered originals, plus a whole disc's worth of rough and alternative mixes. Highlights include the "bubblegum" version of *Glad To See You Go*, the "doo-wop mix" of *You're Gonna Kill That Girl* and Joey and Dee Dee's sped-up freaks babble for *Pinhead*. There's also hit single *Sheena Is A Punk Rocker* and *Babysitter*, which replaced *Carbona Not Glue* on the album after it was pulled.

Least loved no longer, *Leave Home* is repositioned among the Ramones' very best as a towering classic of its era. Roll on *Rocket To Russia*.

Kris Needs

Bad English

Bad English *ROCK CANDY*

The last of the blockbuster 80s AOR albums.

Bad English were a supergroup when the phrase actually meant something. Their million-dollar line-up featured members of The Babys (bassist Ricky Phillips and singer John Waite, the latter a solo star in his own right), Journey (guitarist Neal Schon) and both (keyboard player Jonathan Cain).

What could possibly go wrong? Nothing apart from timing, it turned out. Their self-titled debut album arrived in 1989, moments before the melodic rock ship was beached by the tidal wave of changing musical tastes. Its two monster hits, *When I See You Smile* and *The Price Of Love*, were perfectly pitched late-80s ballads, marshmallow-soft hankie-wavers. But it was when Bad English – and especially Schon – cranked things up that they were most effective.

The hard-edged *Rockin' Horse* belies its kids'-toy title, while the Anne Rice-inspired Gothic AOR of *Forget Me Not* remains one of the towering tunes of the era (for aficionados, this reissue adds two unreleased but inessential remixes).

What happened next is scrawled in the history books: grunge came and everything changed. There were still great AOR albums and bands to come, but not one had the success of the old days. *Bad English* marked the end of an era, but what a last hurrah it was.

Dave Everley

Diamond Head

Death And Progress/ Evil Live *DISSONANCE*

Albums four and five from the NWOBHM's ill-fated heroes.

Ironically, respect for Diamond Head actually grew in the decade after they split, following the relative failure of their overambitious third album *Canterbury*. Lars Ulrich and Dave Mustaine raved about the band many times (albeit due to their 1980 debut *Lightning To The Nations*), and so in 1993, guitarist Brian Tatler and singer Sean Harris decided to record together again.

Death And Progress (**7/10**) was the result. The new line-up, completed by drummer Karl Wilcox (from Tatler's interim band Radio Moscow), with a pre-3 Colours Red Pete Vuckovic on bass, were given a hard-hitting sound by Bad Company engineer Andrew Scarth.

The reborn band were truly impressive, delivering straight-ahead metal such as *Wild On The Streets; Star Crossed (Lovers Of The Night)*, featuring a solo by Tony Iommi; *Truckin'*, on which Mustaine lent a hand; and they even carried off the radio-friendly *Run*. The signs were good…

But come this second re-release, *Evil Live* (**5/10**) from 1994, they had split again. It features the full show from their much-hyped relaunch at the Milton Keynes Bowl where Metallica topped the bill. It's not bad but in retrospect, the Zep-styled leanings of their eight-song setlist were unlikely to be embraced even by the Ulrich-primed Metallifans.

Meanwhile, the 'bonus' disc would disappoint even hardcore fans. Among its five covers, Harris excels on Joni Mitchell's *This Flight Tonight*, but wrecks the UK Mr Big's *Sweet Silence* by blowing raspberries. Of three originals, only the Free-like third, *Let Me Down Easy*, is worthy.

Evil Live merely encapsulates the sound of a great band running out of steam.

Neil Jeffries

Bill Nelson

Chance Encounters In The Garden Of Lights

COCTEAU DISCS

Two-CD version of ambient set originally issued in 1987.

Featuring 21 tracks from the 1988 bonus edition, this double set was originally released under the titles *The Angel At The Western Window* and *The Book Of Inward Conversation*. Bill Nelson himself said of this music that it was the "most personal and least demonstrative" he had made, conceived in moments of "intense stillness" and "musical vacuity".

Not very many artists were doing ambient in the late 80s, just prior to the chillout post-rave era, but Nelson had always had an interest in the genre, paying homage to Erik Satie, who arguably conceived the genre on *Furniture Music*.

Often clocking in at under two minutes, the 63 tracks on this

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collection are an accumulation of discreet pearls, vivid but fleeting musical sketches whose titles (*Revolving Globes*, *Staircase To No Place*) evoke their oblique, temporarily vivid moods.

Nelson, a staggeringly talented guitarist, sublimates his skills here amid soft, filtered washes of watercolour electronica. However, compared to the likes of Harold Budd and Brian Eno, you sense he can never quite prune down to the minimal extent they do – just occasionally, these tracks are a little busy. "Too many notes," as the king said to Mozart in *Amadeus*. Generally, though, this is a customised and highly immersive set.

David Stubbs

Jetboy

Feel The Shake *ROCK CANDY*

Hair today, gone tomorrow.

Almost all but forgotten, except among aficionados of LA's 80s hair metal scene, Jetboy could have had a real shot at the top instead of being just a footnote.

Their ignominious fate was precipitated by their label Elektra dropping them just as their debut was about to hit the shelves in September 1987. It eventually appeared in late 1988 on MCA, but by that point, their old mates Guns N' Roses had the world in the back pocket of their collective leather strides.

In reality, *Feel The Shake* probably wouldn't have ignited the same degree of fervour as, say, *Appetite For Destruction* – the songs are well crafted and hooky, but what they lack is the ballsy attitude the band had live.

The title track has an irresistible, primal riff and *Hometown Blues* provides depth as the band pine for their home city of San Francisco, but elsewhere you get the tame cartoon rebellion of *Make Some Noise* and the rather polite pop-rock of *Hard Climb*.

Lewder, cruder and sleazier would have been much more fun – a situation rectified by the tougher-sounding second album *Damned Nation* in 1990. However, by that point Jetboy were out of fuel and they called it a day in 1993. The band reconvened in 2010, but that's another story…

Essi Berelian

Various

Manchester North Of England 1977-1993 *CHERRY RED*

Manchester, so much to answer for.

There's no Smiths in this set, but that's it. Everyone else is represented (or near enough everyone else that you can't spot the gaps) on this exhaustively compiled, seven-CD, 146-track musical journey through the nether regions of what's arguably Britain's most iconic musical city.

New Order, A Certain Ratio, Joy Division, The Fall, Happy Mondays, Stone Roses, Morrissey, John Cooper Clarke, 808 State, Durutti Column, The Charlatans… all present and correct and churning out the good stuff.

And there are so, so many more. There are so many undiscovered and/or forgotten and/or cherished dance and pop gems, from The Distractions' heart-rending *Maybe It's Love* and the twisted, distorted feminist beat of Ludus to X-O-Dus' stalwart *English Black Boys* and the 1990s baggy contingent (Word Of Twist, Northside, Hypnotone et al).

Look Roger! There's the Membranes! Jane! Paris Angels! Big Flame! There's *NME* journalist Cath Carroll's mighty and wrongly overlooked band Miaow!

This ride is as turbulent and enthralling and bumpy as expected, but for every dodgy inclusion (the Mozzer-championed Easterhouse, John The bloody Postman again?) there are three, sometimes four nuggets (The Freshies, a poptastic Smirk, an early Oasis demo, Swirl, Kill Laura's proto-Riot Grrrl grunge).

Hard to find fault with, and much to find pleasure with.

Everett True

The Cars

Expanded Reissues *RHINO*

Reissues from the band who came to define the new wave.

Village Voice critic Robert Christgau got it spot on when he described The Cars' second album, 1979's clean and clinically adept new wave masterpiece *Candy-O* (**7/10**) – the exact midpoint of McCartney and Devo, for anyone taking notes – as "cold and thin, shiny and hypnotic, it's what they do best – rock and roll that is definitely pop without a hint of cuteness".

Candy-O is near brutal in its focus: aimed straight at the heart of US AM radio, and containing several certifiable pop/rock gems, including Top 20 US single *Let's Go*. It peaked at No.3 on the Billboard charts, and the only surprise was that it didn't go all the way to the top spot.

This reissued edition contains several extra tracks – monitor mixes of *Let's Go* and *Lust For Kicks*, for example, while white-tie beatnik singer Ric Ocasek's clipped and fragrant tones remain a delight.

The follow-up, 1980's *Panorama* (**7/10**), marked a return to the band's more minimal, experimental, art-punk roots, although the Top 40 single *Touch And Go* still rollicks along, rockabilly-style.

In places, the third album feels a bit too smart for its own good – like the UK's own XTC, The Cars never suffered from a lack of imagination or a spot of intricate synthesizer or a distended time change – but invariably the pop wins out.

Everett True

The Beach Boys

1967: Sunshine Tomorrow *CAPITOL*

Gotta keep those lovin' good vibrations happenin'…

Revisionist popular culture theories (and we can't get enough of those, can we?) have long suggested that Brian Wilson and the most lauded tandem talents in The Beatles spent the mid-1960s engaged in a transatlantic game of 'follow that' one-upmanship. The fabbest two of the Fab Four set the benchmark with *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, prompting the stay-at-home non-surfer to respond with *Pet Sounds*, which in turn inspired the English oiks to delve deeper into the toy box for *Sgt Pepper*.

Yet surely the most pressing concern was not looking over one's shoulder to check out what your rivals were up to – it was more about contemplating one's own navel and figuring out how to follow your own most recent leap and bound. Who cares if the competition raises the stakes if you aren't holding the cards to trump your own last winning hand?

That's the fanciful and perhaps flimsy conceit behind this compilation, bringing together 12 months of music the Beach Boys made after the last note of *Pet Sounds* left the stylus (*Caroline Mo'*, if you will). The PR bumph boasting of this collection's numerous previously unheard tracks is a bit misleading, in that the bulk of them are merely fresh stereo mixes of songs from the *Smiley Smile* and *Wild Honey* albums.

It's all lovely stuff and exquisitely performed, of course, rarely more so than the yearning version of Stevie Wonder's *I Was Made To Love Her* and the faux soul of *Darlin'*, but to big it up as the next chapter after *Pet Sounds* serves only to burden some perfectly serviceable pop music with a benchmark it really shouldn't be trying to reach. Don't forget that *Pet Sounds* took several years to be recognised as a landmark – at the time of its release, hardly anyone spoke of rock music as something worthy of a legacy, so we really should cut these dudes some slack.

Summer dictates that Beach Boys product of some stripe is front and centre every year. This collection falls between the stools of being too normal for the serious fan and too niche for the floating voter. Nevertheless, it's a refreshing change from the bog-standard hits compendium that usually surfs into the shops when the sun comes out.

Terry Staunton

ROSS HALFIN

Def Leppard

Hysteria 30th Anniversary Edition BLUDGEON RIFFOLA/UMC/MERCURY

Epic multi-disc reissue of the *Thriller* of rock.

Pop quiz: what was the best-selling hard rock album of 1987? Was it Guns N' Roses' all-conquering *Appetite For Destruction*, the record that eviscerated 80s metal long before Nirvana turned up, or was it Def Leppard's titanic *Hysteria*, a chart-eating monster that spawned seven singles and changed the sound of rock overnight?

The answer is neither. The biggest hard rock album of 1987 – by several million miles – was Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet*, even though it was released the previous year. Def Leppard and Guns N' Roses were nowhere to be seen in the end-of-year-charts; even Cinderella's *Night Songs* shifted more copies. It was a confusing time, the 80s.

Appetite For Destruction and *Hysteria* were both classic slow-burners, records that took a while to find their feet then took off like Carl Lewis with a firework up his arse when they did. In the case of GN'R it was eternal end-of-the-wedding-reception favourite *Sweet Child O' Mine* that finally did it for them, 12 months after the event. For Def Leppard the tipping point was *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, the track that launched the careers of a million Midwest strippers.

A sluggish start was the only thing the two albums had in common. Guns N' Roses were a pack of feral dogs with malice in their eyes, and *Appetite* reeked of Jack Daniel's and junkie sweat. Joe Elliott was just three years older than Axl Rose, but Leppard were elder statesman by comparison. They had one multimillion-selling record (1983's *Pyromania*) under their belt, and the era's most successful producer (Mutt Lange) in their corner. If *Hysteria* smelled of anything, it was money. But by God, what a fantastic stench it was.

Thirty years after it first emerged blinking into the light, *Hysteria*, their fourth album, finally gets the multi-disc treatment it deserves. Unjustly, Leppard have never been garlanded with the same respect afforded to some of their peers – not just Guns N' Roses, but Metallica and U2 too. *Hysteria* is as good as anything any of those bands recorded (it's also a fine reminder of how integral a part of Leppard the late, great Steve Clark was – the guitarist bought a shot of nervy but cool charisma that the band have never truly replicated).

Hysteria famously took four years to make – no time at all these days, but an eternity back in the greed-is-good 80s. It was plagued by false starts – a disastrous attempt to record with Jim Steinman fell apart when the band realised he might be a fantastic songwriter, but he was a hopeless producer; and personal turmoil, most notably drummer Rick Allen's car smash in which he lost his arm and nearly lost his life.

They eventually emerged from the maelstrom with a stone-cold classic. *Hysteria* redefined state-of-the-art, from its meticulously sharp production to the monstrous drum sound that inadvertently gave every other 80s band permission to sound like they were triggering explosive charges in a ballroom every time they hit the skins.

While both of those things played their part in the album's success, it would have been nothing if the songs weren't up to snuff. *Hysteria* aced it in that department too, from the opening space-age glam-rock one-two of *Rocket* and *Women*, through the pop-rock nirvana of *Animal*, to the sort of anthems that are so willfully brainless that only a genius could come up with them – yes, we're looking at you, *Pour Some Sugar On Me* and *Armageddon It*.

Leppard have said they went in wanting to make the hard rock version of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* – an album that spawned seven US Top 10 singles. They didn't quite match that, notching up a comparatively trifling four Top 10 hits and two Top 20s (lead-off single *Women* vanished without trace). Still beats a poke in the eye with a shitty stick, though.

'A monster that changed the sound of rock overnight.'

Much of *Hysteria*'s rocket fuel comes from its first six tracks, but it's the old side two where the gold can be found today. *Gods Of War* is apocalyptic Reagan-era cold war paranoia reimagined as towering pop-metal behemoth. *Run Riot* is the closest Def Leppard ever came to punk rock – not really very close at all, but still as exhilarating as hell. The leering funk of *Excitable* sounds like a bunch of Northern brickies hitting Studio 54 with a carrier bag full of Boddingtons, and is all the better for it.

And then there's the closing track, *Love And Affection*. Often remembered as the runt of the pack, if it's remembered at all, it's actually *Hysteria*'s most underrated track – a rush of guitar-heavy pop with a light touch that's absent from the rest of the album. You could argue that the album wouldn't be any worse if they'd left it off, but that would be missing the point. *Hysteria* is a perfect 12-track work of art, end of story. Add a song and you're drawing a moustache on the Mona Lisa, take one away and you're chopping the cock off Michelangelo's David.

Wisely, this box set treats *Hysteria* like the holy relic it is. Those 12 untouchable tracks perch regally at the centre, with everything else built around it.

The four extra discs in the top-of-the range option pull together all the periphera from the era. Which is most essential depends on your preference for studio tracks over their live counterparts. Two of the discs round-up the various B-sides and remixes from the time. *Tear It Down*, *Ring Of Fire*, *I Wanna Be Your Hero* and an updated version of *Ride Into The Sun* from their very first EP – all perfectly serviceable, though none are good enough to challenge for a place in *Hysteria*'s first team (a hilariously sloshed version of Engelbert Humperdinck's *Release Me* featuring road manager Malvin Mortimer on vocals wouldn't even be allowed in the dressing room).

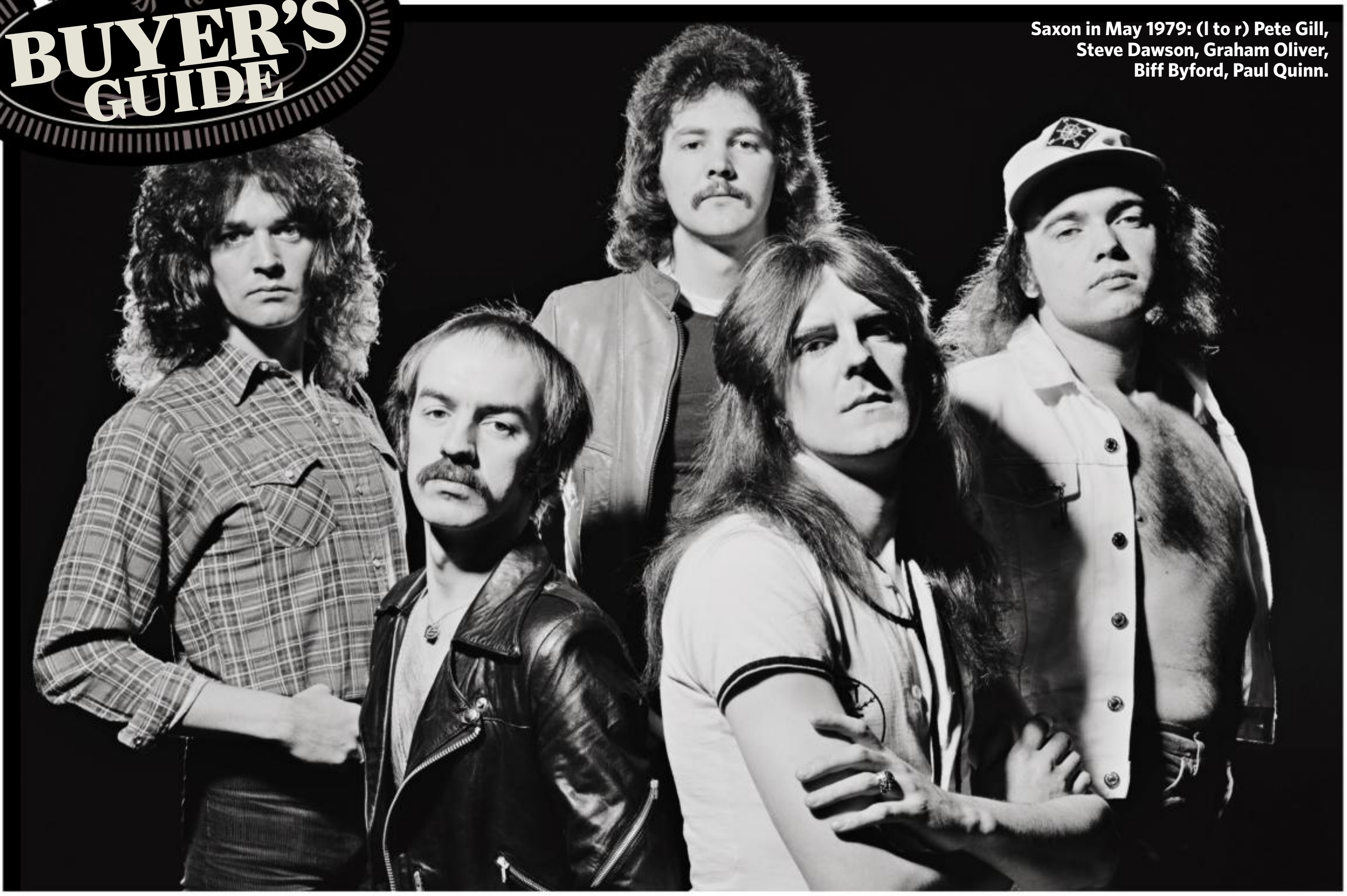
The assorted Nuclear, Lunar and Orgasmic Mixes of the various singles couldn't be more 1980s if they came hand-delivered by Max Headroom driving a Sinclair C5. In terms of 80s touchstones worth getting nostalgic about, the 12-inch remix is down near the bottom of the list.

Discs four and five are more interesting for the Leps diehard, containing an entire live show captured on their groundbreaking In The Round tour. While a recording that has gathered dust in the vaults for 30 years is never going to challenge *Live And Dangerous* for the title of Greatest Live Album Ever, it's still a fine aural snapshot of a band in their imperial prime. But it also begs the question: where are the accompanying visuals? The tour was filmed – "We have lights, we have cameras," Joe Elliott says during the intro to *Women* – but there's no sign of any footage.

That's the one real frustration here. Def Leppard have always been reluctant to throw open the archive for public consumption, but surely this self-imposed statute of limitations has run out? Maybe there aren't any unheard tracks missing in action, but it would be intriguing to hear how the ones that did make it grew from the ground up. Hell, there's a bunch of Jim Steinman demos out there somewhere. Go on, next time put your balls on the table and let this stuff out of the vaults. It's what Cinderella would have done.

Dave Everley

THE HARD STUFF BUYER'S GUIDE



Saxon in May 1979: (l to r) Pete Gill, Steve Dawson, Graham Oliver, Biff Byford, Paul Quinn.

Saxon

They might not be as big or as famous as some of their peers, but they have recorded some of heavy metal's defining albums.

Forty years on, 1977 will always be remembered as the defining moment for punk rock. But it was also in that year that one of Britain's greatest heavy metal bands was born. From Yorkshire, and working-class heroes to a man, Saxon rose out of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal at the turn of the 80s alongside Iron Maiden and Def Leppard. And while Saxon would never attain global superstardom as Maiden and Leppard did, theirs is a mighty legacy that sustains them to the present day. As singer Biff Byford proudly declares: "We're one of the quintessential English heavy metal bands."

Originally named Son Of A Bitch, the renamed Saxon made their initial breakthrough in 1980. In this, the year of *Back In Black, Heaven And Hell, Ace Of Spades* and so many other all-time great hard rock and heavy metal albums, Saxon delivered not one but two genre-defining classics: *Wheels Of Steel* and *Strong Arm Of The Law*.

The band's popularity remained high until the mid-80s, when an attempt to refine their sound for the American market alienated diehard fans and coincided with the departure of totemic bassist Steve 'Dobby' Dawson, whose extravagant moustache and on-stage finger-pointing antics were the inspiration for the character of Derek Smalls, played by Harry Shearer, in *This Is Spinal Tap*. But in the early 90s they turned the ship around. A series of heavier albums restored Saxon's credibility and fan base. And although another founding member, guitarist Graham Oliver, left in 1994, Byford has led the band throughout its 40 years, with his trusty lieutenant, guitarist Paul Quinn, at his side.

In the current line-up of Saxon, a shared history runs deep. Drummer Nigel Glockler has been with the band, on and off, since 1981; bassist Nibbs Carter has been a permanent fixture since 1989; even the 'new boy', guitarist Doug Scarratt, is now a Saxon veteran of more than 20 years.

In the band's long career there have been 21 studio albums and 10 live sets. Byford admits that "there was a period when we lost our edge". But as proven on latter-day albums such as *Lionheart* and, most recently, *Battering Ram*, this veteran band still deliver on Byford's mission statement from 1981: to "fill your heads with heavy metal thunder".

Paul Elliott

Essential Classics

Wheels Of Steel

CARRERE, 1980

Saxon's most famous album is simply one of the greatest heavy metal records of all time. In headbanging anthems such as *Motorcycle Man*, the hit single *747 (Strangers In The Night)* and the gargantuan title track, *Wheels Of Steel* captured the essence of the band and the spirit of the NWOBHM.

It was also the making of the band. After their self-titled debut had flopped, *Wheels Of Steel* blasted into the UK Top 5, a victory made all the sweeter by the uncompromising nature of the music. As Byford said: "It's a really fucking heavy album." And at the time, it blew the mind of a 16-year-old kid named Lars Ulrich.

Strong Arm Of The Law

CARRERE, 1980

With astonishing speed, *Strong Arm Of The Law* arrived just four months after *Wheels Of Steel*. "Amazingly," Byford said, "they both sold 250,000."

Like its predecessor, *Strong Arm Of The Law* was full of anthems, including the manic *Heavy Metal Thunder* and a title track that mocked a failed police drug bust on the band. Ending the album on a darker note, *Dallas 1 PM* recounted the 1963 assassination of US President John F Kennedy. Significantly, the track features the sound of three gunshots. As Byford noted: "We went down the conspiracy theory route."

GETTY

Superior Reputation cementing

Denim And Leather

CARRERE, 1981

Completing the holy trinity of landmark Saxon albums from the band's golden era, *Denim And Leather* is at its heart a celebration of heavy metal culture and the unity between the band and their audience.

The title track begins with lines on the NWOBHM and ends with the chorus swelled by Saxon's Militia Guard fan club. *And The Bands Played On* glorifies the first Monsters Of Rock festival, in 1980, at which Saxon starred. Other key tracks include *Princess Of The Night* and *Never Surrender*.

Denim And Leather remains a monument to the old school.

The Eagle Has Landed

CARRERE, 1982

Of Saxon's 10 live albums, their first is still the best. Recorded on the *Denim And Leather* tour in '81 and '82, *The Eagle Has Landed* is the sound of a band at their peak and preaching to the converted – the stuff all great live albums are made of.

Although drummer Pete Gill was gone, his replacement Nigel Glockler matched him for power. The band were like a juggernaut, rolling through all the big songs, *Wheels Of Steel* the biggest and heaviest of all. And the star of the show was Biff, singing his balls off and bantering with the crowd as a genuine man of the people.

Power & The Glory

CARRERE, 1983

On the band's fifth album, loftier ambitions were revealed. Loud and proud heavy metal remained the default setting, but *Power & The Glory* was more polished than previous Saxon records.

Two epic tracks gave the album its weight: *Power And The Glory* is a thunderous battle cry, *The Eagle Has Landed* slow and atmospheric. Rather less impressive were *This Town Rocks*, a work of utter stupidity, and *Nightmare*, a drift towards Americanised rock and a portent of the disaster that came two years later.

Lionheart

SPV/STEAMHAMMER, 2004

On this, the best of Saxon's late-period albums, they found a perfect balance between the old and the new. In the title and cover image of *Lionheart* were echoes of 1984's *Crusader*; in the music, shades of vintage Saxon mixed with modern European power metal.

Saxon brought in a new drummer, Jörg Michael, for *Lionheart*, and his prowess was evident from the start, in the bludgeoning attack of *Witchfinder General*, the heaviest of this album's many heavy songs. But the crowning glory of *Lionheart* is its title track, the sequel to *Crusader* and a true Saxon classic.

Good Worth exploring

Saxon

CARRERE, 1979

Released in '79, ahead of the NWOBHM's chasing pack, Saxon's debut album was a hit-and-miss affair and failed to chart. Its tinny production didn't help, and nor did the band's somewhat muddled creative vision, as illustrated by the ponderous, prog-influenced opening one-two of *Rainbow Theme* and *Frozen Rainbow*.

The real Saxon was in two terrifically rowdy numbers – *Stallions Of The Highway*, the first of their many hell-for-leather biker anthems, and *Backs To The Wall*, which had Biff sticking it to The Man. In these tracks were the signs of what was to come.

Crusader

CARRERE, 1984

It was with the *Crusader* album that Saxon's glory years ended. It sold a reported two million copies worldwide, and after it the band's career went into a steep decline.

The material on *Crusader* ranged from the brilliant to the banal. The title track is among Saxon's greatest epics, as grandiose as the cover art it inspired. And in a completely different mood, there's a boisterous version of Sweet's *Set Me Free*, one of the glam rockers' meatiest numbers. But in knucklehead songs such as *Rock City*, there was a whiff of self-parody. Coincidentally, *This Is Spinal Tap* was also released in '84.

Unleash The Beast

CBH/VIRGIN, 1997

Since the early 90s, Saxon have made a series of fine albums. The significance of *Unleash The Beast* is that it was Saxon's first studio album with guitarist Doug Scarratt, following the departure of Graham Oliver, and also the first album with what is now Saxon's current line-up.

From the off, Scarratt and Paul Quinn sounded great together. Scarratt also co-wrote every track on the album. And in the best of them – *The Preacher*, a dark meditation on faith and fear, and *The Thin Red Line*, another historical battle epic – was the power and glory of old.

Avoid

Innocence Is No Excuse

EMI/PARLOPHONE, 1985

This was the moment when it all turned to shit for Saxon. Newly signed to major label EMI, the band attempted to 'do a Def Leppard' with the glossy *Innocence Is No Excuse*. But this was no *Pyromania*. It was a lame duck full of songs as clichéd as their titles suggested: *Rockin' Again*, *Back On The Streets*, *Rock 'N' Roll Gypsy*. As Biff admitted to *Classic Rock*: "We got lazy and lost focus."

They continued in this vein on 1986's *Rock The Nations* and 1989's *Destiny*. It was only with *Solid Ball Of Rock* in 1990 that Saxon rediscovered their mojo – and their balls.

Essential Playlist

Stallions Of The Highway
Saxon

Backs To The Wall
Saxon

Wheels Of Steel
Wheels Of Steel

747 (Strangers In The Night)
Wheels Of Steel

Motorcycle Man
Wheels Of Steel

Strong Arm Of The Law
Strong Arm Of The Law

Dallas 1 PM
Strong Arm Of The Law

Denim And Leather
Denim And Leather

And The Bands Played On
Denim And Leather

Princess Of The Night
The Eagle Has Landed

Heavy Metal Thunder
The Eagle Has Landed

Power And The Glory
Power & The Glory

Crusader
Crusader

Solid Ball Of Rock
Solid Ball Of Rock

The Preacher
Unleash The Beast

Lionheart
Lionheart

Red Star Falling
The Inner Sanctum

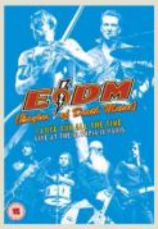
Sacrifice
Sacrifice

Battering Ram
Battering Ram

Eagles Of Death Metal

I Love You All The Time – Live In Paris

EAGLE VISION



EODM's emotional return to the same Paris venue after the Bataclan tragedy.

If the attackers who stormed the Bataclan and gunned down 89 people midway through Eagles Of Death Metal's *Kiss The Devil* on November 13, 2015 thought they were kicking down the pillars of rock'n'roll, they picked on the wrong guys. Just three months later, EODM returned to Paris to finish their set at the Olympia, unbowed, undaunted and bristling with a fearless defiance. As this live recording of that event opens, frontman Jesse Hughes marches on stage in a regal robe, spends three minutes saluting the audience then slicks down his moustache and gets back to business, glam-rocking the ass off of Paris.

As well as a moment's silence "to remember" and Hughes declaring: "I love you mutherfuckers so much you have no fucking idea", it isn't a subdued or restrained commemoration performance. Giving terror not an inch of capitulation, Hughes knee-waggles, groin-walks and horny-chicken-dances through the surgical blues riffs of *Don't Speak (I Came To Make A Bang!)* as wildly as ever, maybe wilder. Without apology, he remains carnally impatient on *So Easy* and beloved of hookers and firearms on the groove-ridden honky-tonk of *Whorehoppin (Shit, Goddamn)*. As a section of seamy garage rock (*Cherry Cola, The Reverend*) gives way to the filthy glam of *I Got A Feelin (Just Nineteen)*, he smashes his guitar on the stage and throws it into the audience, claiming it was "fucking with me and my people". And EODM will not be fucked with, by man or machine, this night.

Spirits high, humour rising. When second drummer Julian Dorio isn't adding heft to Josh Homme's already thundering backbeats on Wild West Britpop tune *I Love You All The Time*, he's kicking back and reading magazines; EODM pump out a full-on Status Quo cover of Stealer's Wheel's *Stuck In The Middle* renamed *Stuck In The Metal*, make like rabid Diamond Dogs on *Miss Alissa* and turn *I Like To Move In The Night* into a sleazebag *My Sharona*.

But even as they cover Duran Duran's *Save A Prayer* in the style of a spaghetti western showdown, and Hughes races to the balcony for a guitar duel with Dave Catching during a final *Speaking In Tongues*, there's no escaping that this is a show drenched in heartbreak and enclosed by a fundamental human unity. It ends with Hughes and Homme in an embrace and rock'n'roll rebuilt as the unquakeable fortress of western ideological freedom. Salute.

Mark Beaumont

Joe Bonamassa

Live At Carnegie Hall: An Acoustic Evening PROVOGUE

JoBo's acoustic extravaganza at legendary New York venue.

"Oh, Christ. Not another live album from Joe Bonamassa," we sighed inwardly upon receiving the press release for *Live At Carnegie Hall*. Still, if a formula's worth doing it's worth doing well – and often. And people do keep buying them, so why not?

But wait! This one's different. Well, we say 'different'. It's still Bonamassa wearing a suit, not saying much and being phenomenally good on guitar, playing blues-rooted songs with similarly impressive session types. There's also bonus interview footage.

And yet there's something very attractive about this DVD/CD performance, with its nine-piece acoustic band from diverse corners of the globe (percussionist Hossam Ramzy played on Page & Plant's *Unledded* album, keyboard player Reese Wynans was in Stevie Ray Vaughan's Double Trouble) who complement rather than compete with each other.

It's mostly a well-chosen set for its grand surroundings. After a slightly misfiring *This Train* (great in it's amplified rock form on *Blues Of Desperation*; a bit awkward with a refined, largely seated acoustic group), it's mostly softer numbers and countrified, almost Ry Cooder-ish strains that thrive in this lavish unplugged environment. And the *Flight Of The Bumblebee*-esque *Hummingbird*, a duet between Joe and cello/erhu virtuoso Tina Guo, is so dazzlingly fast and furious it's quite hypnotising.

This an ambitious, considered and commanding set – not more Joe just for the sake of it.

Polly Glass

The Who: I Was There

Richard Houghton RED PLANET

Fans and insiders tell it like it was.

The latest addition to an ongoing series of collected fly-on-the-wall accounts takes us through The Who's career from 16-year old Keith Moon's December 1962 audition with his first band The Beachcombers at Harrow's British Legion Hall, to The Who's Royal Albert Hall show in March this year.

It's fascinating stuff, obviously, and made all the more gripping for Houghton's canny choice of eye witnesses. For example, not only is it The Beachcombers' rhythm guitarist John Schollar recalling how neophyte Moon aced his audition by skilfully nailing down the off-beat of The Shadows' *Foot Tapper*, it's also Schollar, 55 years later, who calls up Roger Daltrey's office in the hope of blagging some Albert Hall tickets. He got VIP passes. "Well," Schollar concludes, "they did nick our drummer."

I Was There works on two levels: as a reasonably comprehensive history of The Who (from first-person memoirs rather then third-person Wiki-work), or as a lightweight bog book you can dip into for an occasional satisfying snippet. Near neighbour Keith Rowley reveals that Daltrey was known as Trog at school because he could "put his legs behind his head". Among the many illustrations peppered throughout, there's the photograph Entwistle autographed as 'John Brown' – a name he was toying with briefly – for Maureen Browning at the Stevenage Locarno in February 1965.

Who fans, especially those with a modernist's attention to detail, will love this 450-page paperback treasure trove. Accept no substitute.

Ian Fortnam

Laibach

Liberation Day DOGWOOF

Laibach play North Korea. What could possibly go wrong?

"The cinema is a powerful ideological weapon for revolution and construction," wrote North Korea's Dear Leader Kim Jong-il in his 1973 classic *On The Art Of The Cinema*. You wonder what Kim would have made of *Liberation Day*, Morten Traavik's documentary about Laibach, which follows the Slovenians as they become the first Western rock act to perform in the DPRK (although this writer witnessed a drunk tourist singing *The Star Spangled Banner* to a crowd of bemused locals in a Pyongyang hotel bar in 2005).

It's a film about red tape, trust, cultural difference and technological struggle, and the only real drama occurs when band spokesman Ivan Novak goes walkabout without

DAVID WOLFF-PATRICK/PRESS

permission. But it captures Pyongyang's surreal, perplexing atmosphere perfectly, and only resorts to hermit-kingdom cliché once, when ominous music is used to soundtrack footage of ordinary North Korean citizens commuting.

"I don't know what kind of trace we expected to leave here, says Novak. "It's a small step for Laibach, but a big one for humanity."

You might argue with that: the New York Philharmonic's show in 2008 (documented in the excellent film *The Pyongyang Concert*), hasn't increased the amount of cultural exchange between the two countries; and Dennis Rodman's well-documented brand of boozy diplomacy only serves brand Rodman and his sponsors.

But this is Laibach doing what they've always done, mischievous agents-provocateur more interested in sparking debate than providing answers. It's also Laibach doing the things that every North Korean tourist does, whether it's visiting the Grand Monument on Mansu Hill to leave flowers, or negotiating with their guides for that extra inch's leeway on a busy itinerary. More uniquely, it's almost certainly the only documentary you'll ever watch that includes a listing for "additional goat footage" in the end credits.

Fraser Lewry

A History Of Heavy Metal

Andrew O'Neill HEADLINE

It's the way he tells 'em.

Having performed his stand-up show of the same name everywhere from the Edinburgh Fringe to Download festival, the metal and comedy cred of Andrew O'Neill is in no doubt, and really it was just a matter of time before A History Of Heavy Metal was turned into a book.

Telling the tale of his one true love of heavy metal, from its inception and formation (starting at the actual invention of music) to the current state of metal within a changing industry of Bandcamps and a million sub-genres, O'Neill's knowledge is nothing short of impressive. His chronological expedition through the ages, as seen through his own eyes, is backed up by constant witticisms and footnotes of in-jokes and opinions, plus the odd crude illustration – as you'd expect from a lesson in the devil's music. Unsurprisingly, it's *much* more in-depth than his stand-up show. He has obviously gone to great effort to leave no plectrum unturned in the pantheon of heavy metal, and he's not afraid to voice his views on certain bands and the dire straits of the late 90s.

It's perhaps not something you'd teach verbatim at Heavy Metal University, although if we could choose our lecturer it would definitely be O'Neill.

Luke Morton

Memory Of A Free Festival

Sam Knee CICADA BOOKS

By the time we got to Stonehenge...

Do anarchists have coffee tables? If so, this is a perfect addition to whatever else is on it; a superior scrapbook that also serves to answer the kids' questions when they ask if you went to the second Windsor Free Festival.

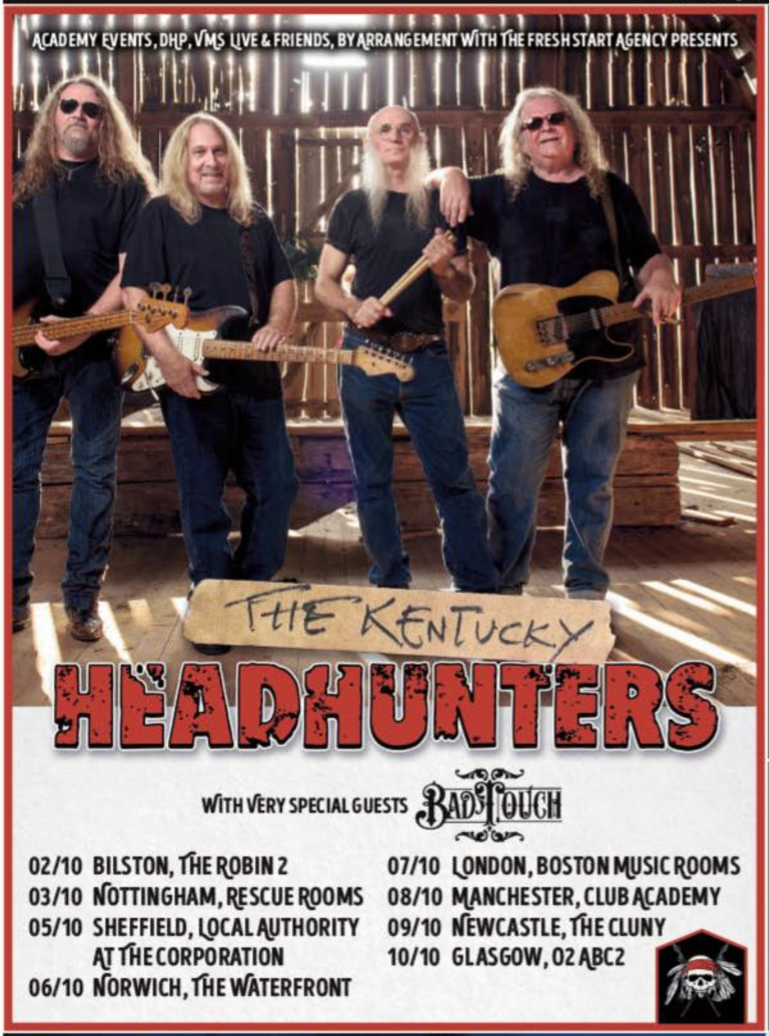
The title comes from David Bowie's song about the free festival he organised and headlined in Beckenham in 1969 that deserves more coverage than it gets. But, like the free Hyde Park concerts around the same time, it had no political dimension that this book is keen to foster. There is also some blurring between free and commercial festivals, even though the latter were obviously run by evil capitalist scum, but they had better toilets and music. And for a while they attracted similar audiences.

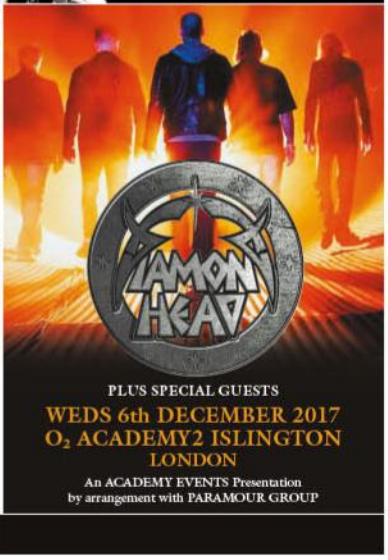
Free festivals came into their own during the 70s, staged at prehistoric sites such as Glastonbury (free until 1981) and Stonehenge, with core counter-cultural values and endless sets by the Pink Fairies and Hawkwind. Hippies and punks jostled along during the late 70s, before the anarchists moved in and deliberately goaded the authorities, who eventually responded with unexpected venom at 1985's Battle Of The Beanfield near Stonehenge.

The photos, mostly taken by punters, give a genuine sense of what it was like to be there, rather than a colour magazine's stylish interpretation. Which is bad news for the fashionistas.

Hugh Fielder

Academy Events present





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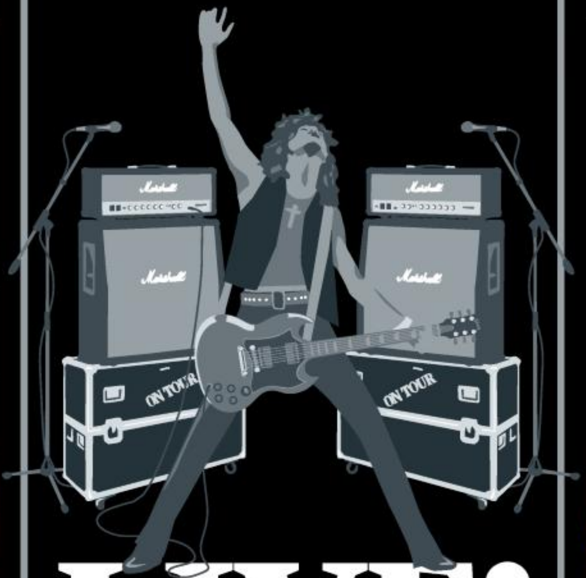


LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

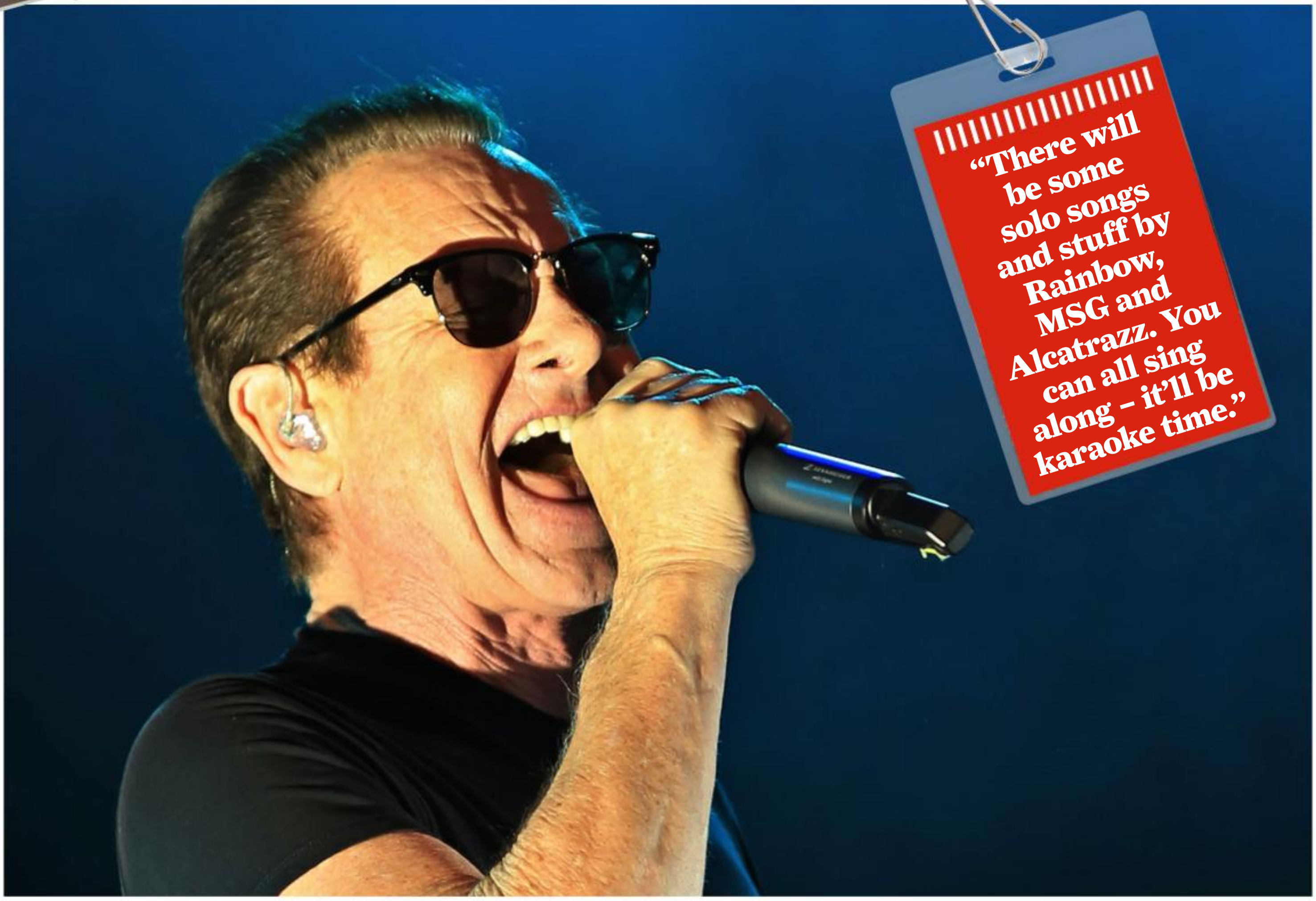
P118

Cheap Trick

Pop-rock royalty show off their crown jewels in North London.

P108 Interviews
P110 Tour Dates
P114 Live Reviews

WILL IRELAND



Graham Bonnet

The singer reveals all about his career-spanning shows and numerous side projects.

Graham Bonnet's career began during the 1960s with The Marbles, before he joined Rainbow for one album. The singer's run with the Michael Schenker Group was cut short after he drunkenly exposed himself on stage in 1982. The following year he formed Alcatrazz with Yngwie Malmsteen. Bonnet has worked as a solo artist as well as alongside numerous guitar heroes.

You've been involved in so many projects, is the Graham Bonnet Band a bona fide group?
Absolutely. Last year we released an album [*The Book*] that was pretty well received. However, Conrad Pesinato is no longer our guitarist. I'm sad to see him go but the record company didn't like him. They expected a Steve Vai or Blackmore type, and Conrad isn't one of those show-offs. We're rehearsing now with his replacement, Joey Tafolla.

A brand new two-song EP, that features a Russ Ballard-written track called *My Kingdom Come*, is released for the tour.
The song's maybe five years old. It's heavy, but it's like something Queen would have done.

EZoo is more of a project though, right?
Yeah. We've just released an album [*Feeding The Beast*]. Most of its tracks were recorded a few years ago, though it's a brand new album as far as the public is concerned. It's just a studio project, though, because the Graham Bonnet Band is very important to me.

On the upcoming dates will we hear mix of everything from your career so far?
It'll be a bit of it all, yeah. There will be some solo stuff and songs by Rainbow, MSG and Alcatrazz. You can all sing along – it'll be karaoke time.

You're playing in your birthplace, Skegness.
Yes I am. We did that place [The Suncastle] on my last UK tour and I met up with old school friends, family members and former bandmates. It was such a great night that I'm going back.

You're playing at the Ramblin' Man Fair too.
I don't know anything about that. What is it?

It's like Monsters Of Rock for grown-ups.
That sounds great. Let's hope the English weather holds, eh?

You're part of Schenker Fest in November. How was it, reconnecting with Michael Schenker?
It's been bloody great. It felt fantastic to go on stage with Michael and stay there for more than five minutes, after what happened all those years ago in Sheffield! [The exposure incident that saw him fired.]

Michael now seems to enjoy performing live.
Yeah. And although I suppose we now play mums' and dads' music, the audiences range from eight to eighty, and they respond to the fact it's completely live. This isn't Mariah Carey; we don't need a troupe of dancers as a distraction.

The tour also features MSG alumni Gary Barden and Robin McAuley on vocals, plus guitarist Steve Mann, bassist Chris Glen and drummer Ted McKenna. Does it get competitive?
Not at all. [At the shows in Japan] it was like a brotherhood. Gary and Robin have no ego whatsoever – they come on stage [during my segment of the show] and sing backing harmonies for me. All of my stuff is frickin' harmonies, and they volunteered to do it. That meant a lot to me.

Could there be an album featuring everyone?
It's not something that's been discussed, but if Michael made the suggestion, that would be great. The Three Tenors – I wouldn't mind that. We could be The Three Fivers [laughs]. **DL**

The tour ends in Buckley on July 30.

THE BOOK OF BONNET

★ Bonnet's first hit was *Only One Woman* with The Marbles in 1968.
★ His time in Rainbow was short – just like his hair.
★ A solo single, *Night Games*, reached No.6 back in 1981.

Climax Blues Band

George Glover on his band's upcoming plans.

Best known for *Couldn't Get It Right,* their Top 10 hit from 1976, Climax Blues Band have existed since 1968. Keyboard player George Glover sets the scene for their latest run of gigs, and a first studio album in 13 years.

The band are in the studio, making their first album without Colin Cooper, who died in 2008.
We're finishing a five-track EP, which will be available in a seven-inch format. Its title is *Hands Of Time*. The full album is out next year, with an extensive tour.

Did you consider ending the band when co-founder Cooper passed on?
Colin was everything to this band, and of course we had those thoughts. We took two and a half years to rest a bit and accept what had happened, and then we spent another twelve months seeking someone that could front the band and play saxophone. They're like rocking-horse shit, so we expanded to a six-piece with one of each.

Graham [Dee] hasn't got the same voice as Colin, but he fits really well. And Colin had made it plain before he died that he wanted the band to carry on.

You've been a member of CBB since 1981 but there are no originals left. Does that breed cynicism from some?
It does. People say: "This isn't the original band," blah blah blah, but I've been in the band longer than any of the original members. Kevin [Morris] from Dr Feelgood, who took over that name from Lee Brilleaux, is a friend of mine, and we talk about it a lot. At the end of the day, we still play a lot of the old material.

You must still play *Couldn't Get It Right*. And how about *I Love You*?
We do *Couldn't Get It Right*, of course. We can do *I Love You*, but we don't. It was sung by Derek [Holt, who left in 1990], but that doesn't stop us from getting dozens of requests to play it at people's weddings!

The website says that Climax still "plays the blues in a creative way". Are you perhaps acknowledging that others do not?
[Laughs] Can I just say: "No comment"? **DL**

An EP launch party takes place in Milton Keynes on August 25.

CLIMAX BLUES BAND: FRANK WESP

The Don (second from left) and his new-look band.

Dokken

Don Dokken talks re-formation rumours and playing Ramblin' Man.

Although US melodic hard rockers Dokken sold millions of albums during the 1980s, simmering differences between vocalist Don Dokken and guitarist George Lynch meant they would never last. As their latest incarnation prepares to fly into the UK for Ramblin' Man Fair, leader Dokken says there will be no further activity from the classic-era line-up after last year's brief reunion in Japan.

Dokken played at the inaugural Rockingham Festival in 2015. Did you enjoy that?
Yeah. Coming to England involves a lot of travel but it's always fun. We were never too successful there, but the band has its hard-core fan base.

There was some confusion when Dokken were confirmed for Ramblin' Man Fair. Somebody mistakenly said you'd be appearing with George, Jeff Pilson and 'Wild' Mick Brown.
Nah. That won't happen again.

Wasn't it a possibility, despite the 2016 reunion shows?
I won't be playing with those guys again. Mick is still in the band but he, myself, Jon Levin [guitar] and Chris [McCarvill, bass] are Dokken.

It's sometimes said that internal tension can be a positive thing to drive a band. Look at The Who.
I don't agree with that. Who wants to be stressed out in their career? There's a difference between tension and competitiveness. Daltrey and Townshend were competitive writers. With Dokken it wasn't tension, the problem was mostly drug abuse, which I wasn't into.

> **"With Dokken it wasn't tension, the problem was drug abuse."**

Should we expect a 'best of' set-list at Ramblin' Man?
Yeah. I've done thirteen records, but I choose not to play the songs from those big-selling records over and over again. It's not interesting for me.

Five years ago you said that *Broken Bones* would be the last Dokken album.
I've changed my mind on that, and we've just started writing a new record. I'm a musician. It's not about money or glory. The bottom has fallen out of the business, but I've gotta write. I also want to do a blues record, maybe.

You also railed against those advising how Dokken should sound, saying: "Do you think someone stood over Picasso telling him [how to paint]?"
When Paul McCartney makes a record, would somebody tell him he needs to write another *Long And Winding Road*, or another *Sgt Pepper*? It's kind of silly, don't you think?

Seven years after your surgery for vocal nodes and tears, how is the voice holding up?
It's really good, the best it's been in years actually. I'm taking better care of myself. We were good at Rockingham but we'll be way better this time. Coming in straight off the plane, my voice was a little tired. This time I have a day off before the show. **DL**

Dokken play the Ramblin' Man Fair on July 29.

Tour Dates

RYAN ADAMS

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Sep 8
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 14
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 15
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 17
Leeds	Academy	Sep 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Sep 19
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 21
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 22

THE AFGHAN WHIGS

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 15
Leeds	Church	Aug 16
Brighton	Concorde 2	Aug 17

AIRBOURNE

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 10
Bristol	Academy	Nov 11
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 13
Manchester	Academy	Nov 14
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 15
Norwich	UEA	Nov 18
Oxford	Academy	Nov 19
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 22

ALTER BRIDGE & THE PARALLAX ORCHESTRA

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 2, 3

AMPLIFIED OPEN AIR FESTIVAL
PUDDLE OF MUDD, REEF, DIAMOND HEAD, VEGA, MORE

Gloucestershire	Quarrydowns	Jul 21-23

TORI AMOS

Cork	Opera House	Sep 6
Dublin	Bord Gais	Sep 7
London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 4
Manchester	Palace Theatre	Oct 5
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 6

ANATHEMA

Glasgow	Garage	Sep 22
Belfast	Limelight	Sep 23
Dublin	Academy	Sep 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 26
Sheffield	The Plug	Sep 27
Bristol	Marble Factory	Sep 28
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Sep 29
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 30

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL
CONVERGE, TESSERACT, EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 17-19

BAD TOUCH, MOLLIE MARRIOTT

Sheffield	Plug	Nov 9
Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Nov 10
Bristol	Tunnels	Nov 16
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Nov 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 18
Nottingham	Bodega	Nov 19
Glasgow	Stereo	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 24
Coventry	Empire	Nov 25
London	Islington Academy	Nov 26
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Dec 1
Southampton	Talking Heads	Dec 2
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock Festival	Dec 3

DAN BAIRD & HOMEMADE SIN

Bristol	Thunderbolt	Jul 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Jul 21
Evesham	Iron Road	Jul 22
Cardiff	The Globe	Jul 23
Kendal	Bootleggers Bar	Jul 26
Bingley	Arts Centre	Jul 27
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 29
Stafford	Middle Of Nowhere Festival	Jul 30
Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 7
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 8
Glasgow	ABC2	Nov 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Nov 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 11
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 12

BIG BIG TRAIN

London	Cadogan Hall	Sep 29, 30, Oct 1

BIG BOY BLOATER & THE LIMITS

Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 30
London	Greenwich Pelton Arms	Aug 5
Cottingham	Folk Festival	Aug 26
Aldershot	West End Centre	Sep 15
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Sep 22
Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 23
Newbury	Arlington Arts	Sep 30
Nottingham	The Maze	Oct 5
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 6
Preston	Continental	Oct 7
Birmingham	Dark Horse	Oct 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Oct 12
Darlington	The Forum	Oct 13

Recommended

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Dublin	Academy	Oct 23
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 24
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 26
Manchester	Academy	Oct 27
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 28
Leeds	Academy	Oct 30
Brighton	Dome	Oct 31
Bristol	Academy	Nov 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 3
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 4

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
MEGADETH, GHOST, BLIND GUARDIAN, TESTAMENT, MORE

Walton-on-Trent	Catton Park	Aug 10-13

BLUESFEST
STEELY DAN, THE DOOBIE BROTHERS, GOV'T MULE, HALL & OATES, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Oct 27-29

BLUESFEST DUBLIN

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 29

GRAHAM BONNET BAND

Skegness	Suncastle	Jul 23
Bristol	Bierkeller	Jul 24
York	Fibbers	Jul 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Jul 27
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 28
Derbyshire	Rock And Blues Festival	Jul 29
Buckley	Tivoli	Jul 30

ELKIE BROOKS

London	Palladium	Sep 19

BROTHER FIRETRIBE

London	Manette Street Borderline	Oct 21
Nottingham	Rockingham Festival	Oct 22

THE CADILLAC THREE, BROTHERS OSBORNE

Belfast	Mandela Hall	Nov 9
Cardiff	Y Plas	Nov 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 14
Norwich	UEA	Nov 15
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 17
Manchester	Academy	Nov 18
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 19
Glasgow	ABC	Nov 20

CAMBRIDGE ROCK FESTIVAL
FM, TYGERS OF PAN TANG, ATOMIC ROOSTER, MORE

Cambridge	Horseheath Lodge	Aug 3-6

FRANK CARTER & THE RATTLESNAKES

Bristol	Academy	Dec 1
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 2
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 3
Glasgow	ABC	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 6
Norwich	UEA	Dec 7
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 8

CATS IN SPACE

London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 6, 13, 27
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 12
Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Sep 15
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 16
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 17
Brighton	The Haunt	Sep 19
Glasgow	G2	Sep 25
Manchester	Academy 3	Sep 26

MAX & IGGOR CAVALERA RETURN TO ROOTS, OVERKILL, INSOMNIUM, DESERTED FEAR

London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 12

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Bournemouth	BIC	Sep 24
Manchester	Arena	Sep 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Sep 28
London	O2 Arena	Sep 30

ALTER BRIDGE

The Myles Kennedy-fronted band head to the most regal of London venues, with support from the Parallax Orchestra.

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 2, 3

CLIMAX BLUES BAND

Wavendon	The Stables	Aug 25

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO, ALAN LANCASTER

Minehead	Butlins Quo Convention	Oct 13-16

PHIL COLLINS (RESCHEDULED DATES)

London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 26, 27

ALICE COOPER, THE MISSION, THE TUBES

First Direct	Arena	Nov 11
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 12
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 14
Manchester	Arena	Nov 15
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 16

CRADLE OF FILTH

Belfast	Limelight	Oct 30
Dublin	Academy	Oct 31
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 2
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 3
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 4
Leeds	Church	Nov 5
Oxford	Academy	Nov 7
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 8
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 9
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 10
Bristol	Bierkeller	Nov 11

CREEPER

Glasgow	ABC	Dec 3
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 4
Bristol	Trinity	Dec 5
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 7
Manchester	Albert Hall	Dec 9
Southampton	Guildhall	Dec 10

CROPREDY FESTIVAL
RICHARD THOMPSON, MARILLION, CATS IN SPACE, MORE

Banbury	Cropredy Village	Aug 10-12

THE DARKNESS

Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 23
Manchester	Academy 1	Nov 24
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Nov 25
Leeds	Academy	Nov 27
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 28
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Victoria Hall	Dec 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 2
Norwich	UEA	Dec 3
Guildford	G Live	Dec 5
Margate	Winter Gardens	Dec 6
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Dec 7
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 9
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Dec 10
Brighton	Dome	Dec 11
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Dec 13
Bristol	Colston Hall	Dec 14

DEATH ANGEL

Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Aug 8
Glasgow	Audio	Aug 9
Bridgend	Hobos	Aug 10
London	Camden Underworld	Aug 11

DEEP PURPLE, EUROPE

Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 17
Manchester	Arena	Nov 18
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 22
London	O2 Arena	Nov 23

DELAIN, MARCO HIETALA

London	Camden Koko	Nov 1

DIAMOND HEAD

Gloucester	Amplified Festival	Jul 23
Whitehaven	Haven & Hell Festival	Aug 5
Dublin	Fibber McGee's	Nov 23
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Nov 24
Limerick	Dolans Warehouse	Nov 25
Dundee	Beat Generator	Nov 30
Edinburgh	La Belle Angèle	Dec 1
Sheffield	HRH Festival	Dec 2
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 7
Southampton	The Brook	Dec 8

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

Dublin	Bluesfest	Oct 28
London	Bluesfest	Oct 29
York	Barbican	Oct 31
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 3
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 4

THE DOWLING POOLE

Worcester	Marrs Bar	Sep 7
Bedford	Esquires	Sep 8
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 9

DRAGONFORCE

Glasgow	Garage	Oct 4
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 5
York	Fibbers	Oct 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 7
Manchester	Sound Control	Oct 8
Birmingham	Academy 2	Oct 11
Cardiff	Globe	Oct 12
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 13
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Oct 14
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 15

ELECTRIC BOYS

Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 26
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 27
Glasgow	ABC 2	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 29
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 30
Porthcawl	Planet Rockstock Festival	Dec 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 3
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 4

ELECTRIC WIZARD, ANGEL WITCH, RIDDLES

Bristol	Bierkeller	Aug 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 18
Newcastle	Riverside	Aug 19

THE ENID

London	Highbury Union Chapel	Aug 5

FEEDER

Chepstow	Racecourse	Aug 25

KEVIN NIXON

FISH

Leeds	Metropolitan University	Dec 8
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 9
Leamington	The Assembly	Dec 10
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 12
Bristol	Academy	Dec 13
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 15, 16
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 19
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Dec 20
Glasgow	ABC	Dec 21

FM

Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Jul 28
Pentrich	Rock & Blues Custom Show	Jul 29
Sutton-in-Ashfield	The Diamond	Aug 25
Chepstow	Castell Roc	Aug 26

FOCUS

Poole	Mr Kyps	Jul 28
Kidlington	Football Club	Jul 29
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 30
Faversham	New Day Festival	Aug 26
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 5
Tavistock	The Wharf	Oct 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 7
Oswestry	Lion Quays Hotel	Oct 8
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 9
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 10
Ayr	Gaiety Theatre	Oct 11
Glasgow	The Ferry	Oct 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 13
Wigan	Old Courts	Oct 14
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 15
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 18
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 19
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Oct 20, 21

FOO FIGHTERS

London O2 Arena Sep 19

FOREIGNER

Manchester	Apollo	May 12
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 15
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 16

GOOD CHARLOTTE

Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 28
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 30
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 1
Manchester	Academy	Dec 2
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 3

GOV'T MULE

Dublin	Academy	Oct 22
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 26
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 27
London	O2 Arena Bluesfest	Oct 28

GUN

Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 2
Manchester	Club Academy	Dec 8
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Dec 9

HARD ROCK HELL
AIRBOURNE, Y&T, DEE SNIDER, MORE

Pwllheli	Hafan Y Môr Holiday Park	Nov 9-12

HARD ROCK HELL DOOMS VS STONER
MY DYING BRIDE, ORANGE GOBLIN, KADAVAR, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 30, Oct 1

HARD ROCK HELL NWOBHM
RAVEN, DIAMOND HEAD, LIONHEART, AVENGER, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Dec 2, 3

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
CARL PALMER'S ELP LEGACY, CARAVAN, FOCUS, MORE

Pwllheli	Hafan Y Môr Holiday Park	Nov 16-19

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
FASTER PUSSYCAT, VAIN, TIGERTAILZ, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 2, 3

BETH HART

Leeds	Town Hall	Oct 30
Bath	Forum	Nov 1
Coventry	Cathedral	Nov 3
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 4

HAVEN AND HELL FESTIVAL
DIAMOND HEAD, GIRLSCHOOL, MASSIVE WAGONS, MORE

Whitehaven	Recreation Ground	Aug 5

HAYSEED DIXIE

Lyme Regis	Marine Theatre	Jul 21
Herefordshire	Nozstock Festival	Jul 22
Guildford	Boileroom	Jul 26

GETTY

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BLUESFEST

Steely Dan (pictured) and the Doobie Brothers head to London for a day of blues and, er, not-blues.

London	O2 Arena	Oct 27-29	Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 29

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Jul 27
Cambridge	Folk Festival	Jul 30
Devon	Beautiful Days Festival	Aug 19
Farnham	Weyfest Festival	Aug 20

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Sep 18
Guildford	G Live	Sep 19
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Sep 20
Barnstaple	Queen's Hall	Sep 22
Worthing	Assembly Halls	Sep 23
Weston-super-Mare	Playhouse	Sep 25
Hull	City Hall	Sep 27
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Sep 28
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 1
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 2
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 5
St Albans	Arena	Oct 6

HELLOWEEN'S PUMPKINS UNITED

London	Brixton Academy	Nov 14

HIM

Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 15
Manchester	Academy	Dec 16
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 17

ILFRACOMBE BLUES FESTIVAL
THE BLUES BAND, THE PRETTY THINGS, SNAKECHARMER, MORE

Ilfracombe	John Fowler Holiday Park	Nov 10-12

ILFRACOMBE PUNK FESTIVAL
RUTS DC, 999, DISCHARGE, MORE

Ilfracombe	John Fowler Holiday Park	Nov 17-19

IN FLAMES, FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

Birmingham	BCA	Dec 17
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 18
Leeds	Arena	Dec 20
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 21

INGLORIOUS

Farnham	Weyfest Festival	Aug 19
Pontipridd	Uni Arts Centre	Sep 30
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 1
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 3
Dublin	Academy	Oct 4
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 6
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 7
Newcastle	Academy 2	Oct 8
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Oct 10
York	Fibbers	Oct 11
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 12
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 20

INSANE CLOWN POSSE, MUSHROOMHEAD

Glasgow	ABC	Nov 15
Bristol	Academy	Nov 16
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 17
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 18
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 19

TOBY JEPSON'S WAYWARD SONS

Bristol	Louisiana	Jul 26
Pentrich	Rock And Blues Custom Show	Jul 28

Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 29
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 30

WILKO JOHNSON, JOHN COOPER CLARKE

London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 26

KADAVAR

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Sep 30

THE KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS, BAD TOUCH

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 3
Sheffield	Local Authority	Oct 5
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 6
London	Boston Music Rooms	Oct 7
Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 8
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 9
Glasgow	ABC2	Oct 10

KING KING

Bath	Forum	Oct 14
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Sheffield	Leadmill	Oct 19
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 20

KMFDM

Newcastle	Think Thank	Sep 5
Glasgow	St Luke's	Sep 6
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Sep 7
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 8
London	Islington Academy	Sep 9
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Sep 10

KORN

London	Brixton Academy	Aug 23

RICHIE KOTZEN

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 1

LEATHERWOLF

Hull	Hair Metal Heaven Festival	Aug 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Aug 28
Evesham	Iron Road	Aug 31
Bognor Regis	The Pier	Sep 1
London	Camden Fiddler's Elbow	Sep 2

THE LEMON TWIGS

Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 10
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 11
Glasgow	QMU	Nov 12
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 14
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 15

LIFE OF AGONY

Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 15
Manchester	Gorilla	Sep 16
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 18
Newcastle	Institute	Sep 19
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 20
Birmingham	Institute 2	Sep 21
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Sep 23

LIONHEART, AIRRACE

Cardiff	Fuel	Nov 30
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Dec 1
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 2

Sheffield	Academy	Dec 3
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 5
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Dec 6

LIONIZE

Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Jul 28
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 29
Birmingham	The Flapper	Jul 30
Manchester	Rebellion	Jul 31
Glasgow	ABC 2	Aug 1
Newcastle	Academy 2	Aug 2
Leeds	Key Club	Aug 3
Oxford	Academy 2	Aug 4
London	Camden Black Heart	Aug 5
Derbyshire	Bloodstock Festival	Aug 11

LIVING COLOUR, STONE BROKEN

Glasgow	Garage	Sep 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 27
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 29
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 30
London	Malet Street Student Central	Oct 1
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 4
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Oct 6
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 7

LONELY ROBOT, TILT

Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Aug 18
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 19
Bristol	Thekla	Aug 20

LYNCH MOB

Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 9
Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 10
London	Islington Academy	Nov 12

ERJA LYYTINEN

Sheffield	The Greystones	Sep 20
Edinburgh	The Caves	Sep 21
Nottingham	Bodega	Sep 22
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 23
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 24
London	Manette Street Borderline	Sep 25
Bristol	The Tunnels	Sep 26

MAGNUM

Bilston	Robin 2	Jul 29
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 30

Recommended

YNGWIE J MALMSTEEN

London	Kentish Town Forum	Aug 2

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Bolesworth Castle	Carfest North	Jul 30
Newcastle	Live From Times Square	Aug 5
Laverstoke Park Farm	Carfest South	Aug 27
Bingley	Music Live	Sep 1

AIMEE MANN

London	Palladium	Oct 26
Dublin	National Stadium	Oct 28
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 29

MARILYN MANSON

Manchester	Apollo	Dec 4
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 5
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 6
Newport	Centre	Dec 8
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 9

MARILLION

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 12
London	Palladium	Nov 7
Manchester	Academy	Nov 8

IMELDA MAY

Hull	City Hall	Nov 19
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 22

MOGWAI

London	Brixton Academy	Dec 15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 16

MARILLION

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 13

MASTODON

Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 5
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Dec 6
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 7
Manchester	Academy	Dec 9
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 10

JOHN MAYALL

Crawley	The Hawth	Oct 17
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Oct 18

Stoke-on-Trent	Victoria Hall	Oct 19
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 20
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 21
Tunbridge Wells	Assembly Hall	Oct 22
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 24
Norwich	Theatre Royal	Oct 25
Salisbury	City Hall	Oct 26
Truro	Hall for Cornwall	Oct 27
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 28
Portsmouth	Kings Theatre	Oct 29
York	Grand Opera House	Oct 31
Southport	Theatre	Nov 1
London	Cadogan Hall	Nov 2, 3
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 4
Bristol	Colston Hall	Nov 5
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Nov 7
Oxford	New Theatre	Nov 8
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Nov 9
Guildford	G Live	Nov 10
Canterbury	Marlowe Theatre	Nov 11
Blackpool	Grand Theatre	Nov 12
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 14
Halifax	Victoria Theatre	Nov 15
High Wycombe	Swan Theatre	Nov 16
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Nov 17
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	Nov 18
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Nov 19
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 21
Buxton	Opera House	Nov 22
St Albans	Arena	Nov 23
Weston-super-Mare	Playhouse Theatre	Nov 24
Bournemouth	Pavilion Theatre	Nov 25
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Pavilion	Nov 26

SIMON McBRIDE

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Nov 2
St Helens	Citadel	Nov 3
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 6
Hull	Fruit	Nov 7
London	Islington Academy	Nov 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 9
Ilfracombe	Blues Festival	Nov 11
Bristol	The Tunnels	Nov 13

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Cambridge	Rock Festival	Aug 4
Kendall	Bootleggers	Aug 10
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Aug 19
Halifax	Playhouse	Sep 23
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 5
St Helens	Citadel	Oct 6
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 27
Keighley	The Octagon	Oct 28
Bristol	The Tunnels	Dec 10
Derby	Flowerpot	Dec 14
Barton-upon-Humber	Ropery Hall	Dec 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 16

METALLICA, KVELERTAK

London	O2 Arena	Oct 22, 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 26
Manchester	Arena	Oct 28
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Oct 30

MIDNIGHT OIL

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 23

MOTORPSYCHO

London	Islington Academy	Oct 23

NAZARETH

London	Great Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 13
Norwich	UEA	Oct 14

A NEW DAY FESTIVAL
URIAH HEEP, BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST, EDGAR BROUGHTON, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 25-27

NEW FOUND GLORY

Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 20
Oxford	Academy	Sep 21
Norwich	UEA	Sep 22
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 23
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Sep 25
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 28
Manchester	Academy	Sep 29
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 30
Leeds	Academy	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 3
Bristol	Academy	Oct 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 7
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 8

GARY NUMAN

Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 30
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 2
Leeds	Academy	Oct 3
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 5
Oxford	Academy	Oct 6
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 7
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 9
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 10
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 11
Manchester	Academy	Oct 13

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

ROYAL BLOOD

Find out how just two guys make such a big and wonderful racket when they come to a town near you in November.

See below for dates, currently November 13-29

London	Brixton Academy	Oct 14
Brighton	Dome	Oct 16
Norwich	UEA	Oct 17
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Oct 18

Recommended

OPETH, ENSLAVED

Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 15
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 16
Belfast	Limelight	Nov 17
Dublin	Academy	Nov 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 19
Bristol	Academy	Nov 21
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 22

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

PAPA ROACH

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 6
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 7
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 10
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 11

PARADISE LOST, PALLBEARER

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 3

PLACEBO

Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 7
Dundee	Caird Hall	Oct 8
Doncaster	Dome	Oct 10
Blackpool	Empress Ballroom	Oct 11
Reading	Rivermead Centre	Oct 13
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 14
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 16
Swindon	Oasis Leisure Centre	Oct 17
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 20
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Oct 21
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 23, 24

THE PRETENDERS

Newcastle	City Hall	Sep 30
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 1
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 3
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 4
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 7
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 8
Brighton	Dome	Oct 10
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 11
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 13
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 14
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 15
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 17
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 18

THE PRETTY THINGS

London	Great Portland Street 229 Club	Jul 28

PRONG

Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Jul 20
Manchester	Rebellion	Jul 21
London	Camden Underworld	Jul 22

CHUCK PROPHET

Gateshead	SummerTyne Festival	Jul 23

Sheffield	Leadmill	Jul 24
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Jul 25
Belfast	Errigle Inn	Jul 26
Perth	Southern Fried Festival	Jul 29
London	ULU Folk And Roots Festival	Nov 28
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Nov 18
Edinburgh	Belle Angele	Nov 19
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Nov 20

PSYCHEDELIC FURS

Glasgow	Academy	Sep 1
Leeds	Academy	Sep 2
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 3
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 5
Bristol	Academy	Sep 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 7
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 9
Oxford	Academy	Sep 10
Norwich	UEA	Sep 11

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 25
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 26
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Nov 28
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 30
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 1
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 3
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 6
Sheffield	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
Manchester	Arena	Dec 9
London	O2 Arena	Dec 12
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 15

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Manchester	Arena	Nov 19
London	O2 Arena	Nov 21
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Nov 23
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 24

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
ZZ TOP, EXTREME, KANSAS, SAXON, DOKKEN, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 28-30

CHRIS REA

Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 20
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 22
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 23
Harrogate	International Centre	Nov 25
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 27, 29
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Dec 1
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 3
Sheffield	City Hall	Dec 5
Belfast	Waterfront	Dec 8
Oxford	New Theatre	Dec 10
Brighton	Centre	Dec 11
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 13

READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS
MUSE, AT THE DRIVE-IN, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 25-27
Leeds	Bramham Park	Aug 25-27

REBELLION FESTIVAL
BAD RELIGION, SHAM 69, SPLODGENESSABOUNDS, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 3-6

DAN REED (UNPLUGGED)

London	St Pancras Old Church	Sep 14
Salford	Sacred Trinity Church	Sep 15
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Sep 16
Beeston	Greyhound	Sep 17

RISE AGAINST

Birmingham	Academy	Nov 1
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 2
Leeds	Academy	Nov 4
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 5
Dublin	Academy	Nov 6
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 8

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
Y&T, BRITISH LION, GRAHAM BONNET, FM, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 27-29

ROCKINGHAM FESTIVAL
VINCE NEIL, LOVERBOY, MORE

Nottingham	Trent University	Oct 20-22

ROYAL BLOOD, AT THE DRIVE IN

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 13
Reading	Rivermead Centre	Nov 14
Manchester	Arena	Nov 16
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 17
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 18
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 24
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 25
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 26
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 28
Brighton	Centre	Nov 29

SACRED REICH

London	Camden Underworld	Jul 26
Birmingham	Academy 2	Jul 27

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, DAN PATLANSKY

Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 7
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 9
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 10
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 12
Bristol	Colston Hall	Nov 14
London	Royal Festival Hall	Nov 15
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 20

MICHAEL SCHENKER FEST, DEPARTED

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 2
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 3
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 4
Hull	City Hall	Nov 5

MATT SCHOFIELD, HENRIK FREISCHLADER

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Jul 28
Bristol	The Tunnels	Jul 29
Maryport	Blues Festival	Jul 30

SARI SCHORR & THE ENGINE ROOM

South Shields	The Unionist	Nov 9
Bewdley	St George's Hall	Nov 10
Tenby	Blues Fest	Nov 11
Bristol	Louisiana	Nov 12
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Nov 17
Winchester	Railway Inn	Nov 18
London	Putney Half Moon	Jan 16
Skegness	Blues Weekend	Jan 19
St Helens	Citadel	Jan 20

SEETHER

London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 16
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 17
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 18

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 29
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Jul 30
Bournemouth	Mr Kyps	Oct 27
London	Bluesfest	Oct 27
Leamington Spa	Assembly Rooms	Oct 30
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 31
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 1

SIKTH

Manchester	Academy 3	Dec 2
Glasgow	Garage	Dec 3
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 4
Bristol	SWX	Dec 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Dec 7
London	Camden Koko	Dec 8

SOUTHERN FRIED FESTIVAL
NICK LOWE, LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III, CHUCK PROPHET, MORE

Perth	Various venues	Jul 27-30

SPARKS

Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 18
Newcastle	Boiler Room	Sep 19

REX

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Sep 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 23
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 24
Bristol	Academy	Sep 26
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 27, 28

SQUEEZE, NINE BELOW ZERO

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 7
Milton Keynes	Theatre	Oct 9
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 10
Brighton	Dome	Oct 12
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 13
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 14
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 16
Guildford	G Live	Oct 17
Ipswich	Regent	Oct 19
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 20
Reading	Hexagon Theatre	Oct 23
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Oct 24
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 26
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 27
Harrogate	International Centre	Oct 28
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 30
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 2
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Nov 3
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 4
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 6

STATUS QUO (UNPLUGGED)

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 26
Sheffield	City Hall	Nov 27
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 29
Reading	Hexagon	Nov 30
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 2
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 3
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Dec 5
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 6
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Dec 8

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
SAXON, SKINDRED, INGLORIOUS, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-Y-Dafal Farm	Jul 29, 30

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS

Devon	Beautiful Days Festival	Aug 18
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Aug 19
Chester	Live Rooms	Aug 20
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Aug 22
Cork	City Hall	Aug 24
Dublin	Academy	Aug 25
Belfast	Custom House Square	Aug 26

STONE SOUR, THE PRETTY RECKLESS

Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	Nov 29
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 30
Brighton	Centre	Dec 1
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 4
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 8

SUMMER'S END FESTIVAL
FROST*, THE TANGENT, SOUTHERN EMPIRE, MASCHINE, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Oct 6-8

SUPERSUCKERS

Brighton	Patterns	Oct 8
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Oct 9
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 10
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Oct 11
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Oct 12
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 15

RICHARD THOMPSON

Brighton	Dome	Oct 11
Guildford	G-Live	Oct 12
Poole	Lighthouse	Oct 13
Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 14
Cardiff	Millennium Centre	Oct 15
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 17
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 18
Salford	The Lowry	Oct 19
Saffron Walden	Saffron Hall	Oct 21
Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Oct 22
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 25
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 26
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 27
Norwich	Theatre Royal	Oct 28
London	Bridge Theatre	Oct 23, 30

THRESHOLD, DAMNATION ANGELS, DAY SIX

London	Islington Academy	Dec 10

THUNDER

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 15, 16

TIGERTAILZ

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 16

ROB TOGNIONI BAND

Blakeney	Harbour Rooms	Aug 25
Colne	Great British Blues Festival	Aug 26
Nantwich	Rory Gallagher Festival	Aug 27
Market Warsop	Black Market	Aug 28

Classic Rock RECOMMENDS

GOV'T MULE

There'll be plenty of jam for your bread from the Warren Haynes-fronted southern rockers. Spread the word.

See page 108 for dates, currently October 22-28

GETTY

Evesham	Iron ÐRoad	Aug 29
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Aug 31
Eire	Harvest Blues Festival	Sep 1-3
Bullingdon	Haven Club	Sep 5
London	Camden Blues Kitchen	Sep 6
Blackpool	Kite Club	Sep 7
Hastings	Big Green Cardigan Festival	Sep 8
Devizes	Long Street Blues Club	Sep 9

TOTO

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 2
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 4
Belfast	Waterfront Auditorium	Apr 7
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 8

TOUCHSTONE

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Prog	Nov 18
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 25

TRAIN

Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 16
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 19
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 20
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 21
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 23

WALTER TROUT, SARI SCHORR & THE ENGINE ROOM

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 9
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Oct 10, 11
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Oct 13
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Oct 14
Preston	Guildhall	Oct 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 17
Harpenden	Public Hall	Oct 18
Bristol	Bierkeller Theatre	Oct 20
Swansea	Sin City	Oct 21
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Oct 22

ROBIN TOWER

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 29

THE TUBES

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 4
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 5
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 6
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 9
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Nov 10

Recommended

TYKETTO

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell	Nov 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Nov 12
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Nov 13
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 24
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Nov 25
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 26

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

TYTAN

Newcastle	Trillions	Aug 3
Edinburgh	Bannermans	Aug 4

UFO

Southampton	The Brook	Sep 12
Dorking	Dorking Halls	Sep 14
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 15
Northampton	Roadmender	Sep 16

FOY VANCE

Manchester	RNCM	Oct 28
Glasgow	Saint Luke's	Oct 29, 30
Dublin	Olympia	Oct 31
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Nov 2-4

VEGA

Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 21
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 22
London	Malet Street Student Central	Sep 23
Manchester	Academy	Sep 28
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 29
Sheffield	The Foundry	Sep 30

SUZANNE VEGA

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 22
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 23
Bristol	Colston Hall	Sep 24
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 26
Brighton	Dome	Sep 27
London	Palladium	Sep 28
Manchester	Bridgwater Hall	Sep 30
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 1
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 2

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 5
Manchester	Rebellion	Nov 6
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 7
Newcastle	Think Tank	Nov 9
Glasgow	G2	Nov 10
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell	Nov 11
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Nov 12
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Nov 14
Southampton	Talking Heads	Nov 15
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 16
Pwllheli	HRH Prog 6	Nov 17
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Nov 18

VOODOO SIX

London	Camden Underworld	Sep 8
Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Sep 14
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 16
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 17
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Sep 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's	Sep 22
Glasgow	Cathouse	Sep 23
Southampton	Talking Heads	Sep 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Sep 29
Swansea	Garage	Sep 30

W.A.S.P.

Hastings	White Rock Pavilion	Oct 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 13
Leeds	Academy	Oct 14
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 15
Glasgow	ABC	Oct 16
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 18
Dublin	Academy	Oct 19
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Oct 22

Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 22
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 24
Bristol	Academy	Oct 25
Norwich	UAE	Oct 26
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 27

THE WATERBOYS

Bristol	Colston Hall	Oct 18
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 19
London	Palladium	Oct 21
Manchester	Opera House	Oct 22
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 23
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Oct 24
Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 26

WEDNESDAY 13

Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 26
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 27
London	Islington Academy	Oct 28

WEEZER

Leeds	Academy	Oct 23
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 25
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 27
London	Wembley Arena	Oct 28

PAUL WELLER

Brighton	Centre	Feb 17
Bournemouth	BIC	Feb 18
Plymouth	Pavilions	Feb 20
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 21
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Feb 23
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Feb 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 25
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 27
Manchester	Arena	Mar 1
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Feb 2
London	O2 Arena	Feb 3

WEYFEST
JOOLS HOLLAND, BUZZCOCKS, INGLORIOUS, MORE

Farnham	Rural Life Centre	Aug 18-20

STEVEN WILSON

Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Mar 15
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Mar 17
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Mar 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Mar 21
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Mar 24
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 25
London	Royal Albert Hall	Mar 27, 28
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 31, Apr 1

WINTER STORM FESTIVAL
TYKETTO, BERNIE MARSDEN, DARE, MASSIVE WAGONS, MORE

Troon	Ayrshire Innovation Centre	Nov 24, 25

WISHBONE ASH

Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 17
Dorking	Dorking Halls	Oct 18
London	Islington Academy	Oct 19
Aberdare	Coliseum Theatre	Oct 20
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 21
Swindon	Arts Centre	Oct 22
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 24
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 25
Wimborne	Tivoli Theatre	Oct 26
Plymouth	The Hub	Oct 27
Newmarket	King Edward Hall	Oct 29
Hunstanton	Princess Theatre	Oct 31
Wirral	Floral Pavilion Hall	Nov 2
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 3
Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 4
Salford	The Lowry	Nov 5
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 7
Kendal	Bootleggers	Nov 9
Edinburgh	Jam House	Nov 10
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Nov 11
Glasgow	The Ferry	Nov 12
Morpeth	Riverside Lodge	Nov 14
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Nov 15
Blackpool	The Layton	Nov 16
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 17
Clitheroe	The Grand	Nov 18

ANDREW W.K.

Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Nov 9
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 10
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 11
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 12
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 13
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 14
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 15

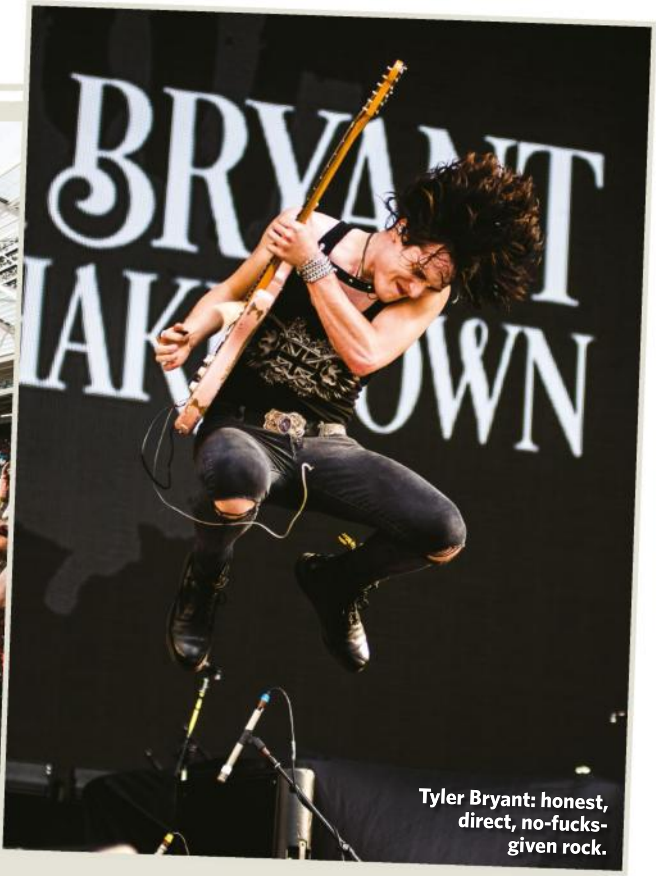
THE ZOMBIES

London	Palladium	Sep 29

ZZ TOP

Manchester	Apollo	Jul 25
Glasgow	Academy	Jul 26
Dublin	3 Arena	Jul 28
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 30

Star in stripes: Axl gets patriotic.



Tyler Bryant: honest, direct, no-fucks-given rock.

Guns N' Roses / The Kills / Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown

London Stadium

The reunited rockers return to London, but do we get the most dangerous band in the world, or a money-making circus?

★ On June 19, 1987, Guns N' Roses played their very first UK gig in front of 500 people at fabled Soho sweatbox the Marquee. They weren't calling themselves The Most Dangerous Band In The World yet, but the implication was there. Nor was that gig quite the birth of the legend, but it was a giant step on the way towards the circus that followed.

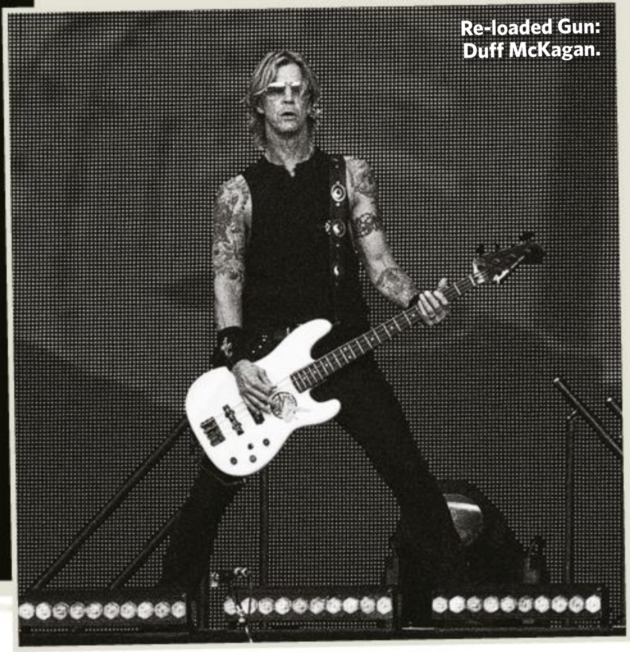
Thirty years later the circus is back in town. This time around, the cramped confines of the Marquee have been swapped for the giant steel-and-glass pavlova that hosted the 2012 London Olympics, and the crowd is now 60,000 strong.

The years in between have been eventful, in the same way that your average prime-time soap opera or large-scale armed conflict is eventful. There has been off-the-scale success and last-days-of-Rome excess, fights, tantrums, firings, bitchiness, silences, rumours and, ultimately, a reunion that was either surprising or inevitable, depending on just how cynical you're feeling.

It would be great to find out exactly what the people involved think about how things have unfolded, except they're not saying anything; Axl, Slash and Duff are keeping themselves away from the media. Which is wise when you consider what's flowed under the bridge over the years hasn't been so much water as several gallons of shit.

Unsurprisingly, the warren of identical corridors that loop beneath the Olympic Stadium appear to be a Guns N' Roses-free zone in the hours leading up to the show – God forbid a stray member of the media actually buttonhole one of them in the corridor. Mind you, Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown have opened several shows on this tour, and they've barely come across them either. "I've seen Slash a few times, and he always says hi," says Bryant, perched on a leather sofa in The Shakedown's dressing room, a faceless area with all the rock'n'roll glamour of a dental surgery.

"We've not seen Axl that much. I've spoken to him maybe once. We talked about how much AC/DC changed our lives. He was a nice guy, but he is kind of an enigma. That's what you want, right?"



Re-loaded Gun: Duff McKagan.

> **"Axl is nice guy but he is kind of an enigma. That's what you want, right?"**
> **Tyler Bryant**

This isn't Bryant and his band's first big tour. The Shakedown have previously opened for Aerosmith and the Axl-fronted AC/DC, the latter at the same venue as today. They're either the luckiest band on the planet or their agent deserves every cent they're paying him, and more.

"You gotta get out in people's faces," says Bryant, a 26-year-old with a mop of black hair and a scrawny charisma. "No one ever made it sitting on their ass."

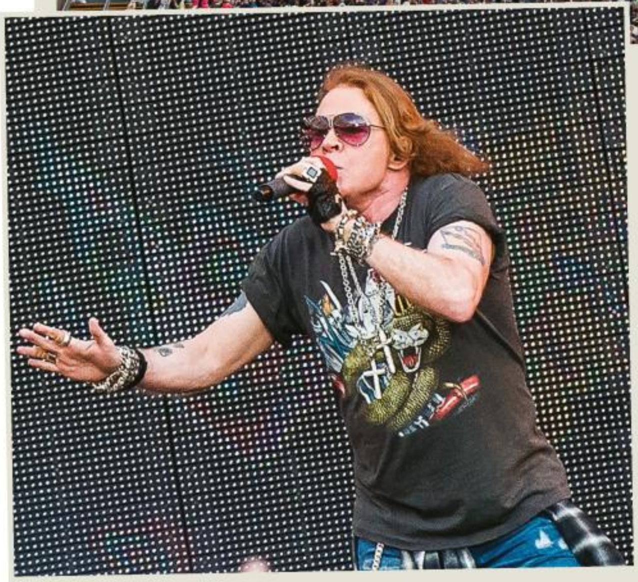
Luck and contacts might have played a big part in them being here at the Olympic Stadium for a second time, but they wouldn't have been asked back if they stank. They don't. Playing in front of a quarter-full arena can't be good for the soul, but The Shakedown seem to look on it as a challenge. "Sometimes it's not easy, sure," says Bryant. "But then it's our job to make people listen."

He's not wrong. Their 30-minute, six-song set is short, to the point and right on the money. *Weak And Weepin'* and *House On Fire* are unashamed old-school, hard-rock anthems given a shot of youthful energy. A souped-up cover of Muddy Waters's *Mojo Workin'* nods to Bryant's beginnings as a teen blues prodigy, while *Don't Mind The Blood* indicates that their forthcoming second album isn't going to mess with the formula. It's honest, direct, heartfelt and does not give a fuck about what's trendy. The fact that the audience in front of the stage triples during the time they're playing suggests they're doing something right.

If Tyler Bryant And The Shakedown are on the way up, then The Kills feel like they've already crested. When they started as a duo back during the garage-rock boom of the early 2000s, they had the whiff of a Top Shop White Stripes, but thankfully that faded as the gatekeepers of cool swivelled their laser glare elsewhere. ▷

'It flies by, helped by the fact the band look like they're having a blast.'

A gold-standard show at the London Stadium.



Ironically they're not a million miles away in fuck-you spirit from the headliners – or their 1987 incarnation, anyway. But musically they're fish out of water today. The likes of *Kissy Kissy* and *Black Balloons* are better fitted soundtracking an edgy fashion show than a stadium filled with fans of old-school rock, and the group look lost on this huge stage. Even singer Alison Mosshart's usual megawatt charisma is absent. Maybe she had to leave it behind at the bag check, or maybe they're just the right band in front of the wrong crowd.

Guns N' Roses have never been the wrong band in front of the wrong crowd. Even before anyone knew who they were, their reputation preceded them. They were a force of nature and envoys of notoriety, the Rolling Stones retooled for the MTV age. There were plenty like them before, but there's been very little since.

That includes Guns N' Roses themselves. It only took a few years for them to transform from feral streets rats into music's most unseemly soap opera. It's not that the two *Use Your Illusion* albums were bad (far from it), or even the pinnacle of hubris (if anyone was going to release two double albums on the same day, it was Guns N' Roses). But they were the moment when the genie was let out of the bottle.

It's taken them this long to even come close to getting it back in. Even now there's a school of thought that says this latest version of Guns N' Roses isn't the real thing – a line-up woth no Izzy Stradlin, no Steven Adler, not even Matt Sorum. Still, even the most ardent cynic has to admit that it's a better deal than the bootleg GN'R Axl has been taking around the arena circuit for the past 10 years.

'GN'R's show tonight is way better than anyone could have anticipated.'

Actually, this show is way better than anyone could have anticipated. The hype that has trailed it more than matches anything from the first time around, and tonight they more than match it.

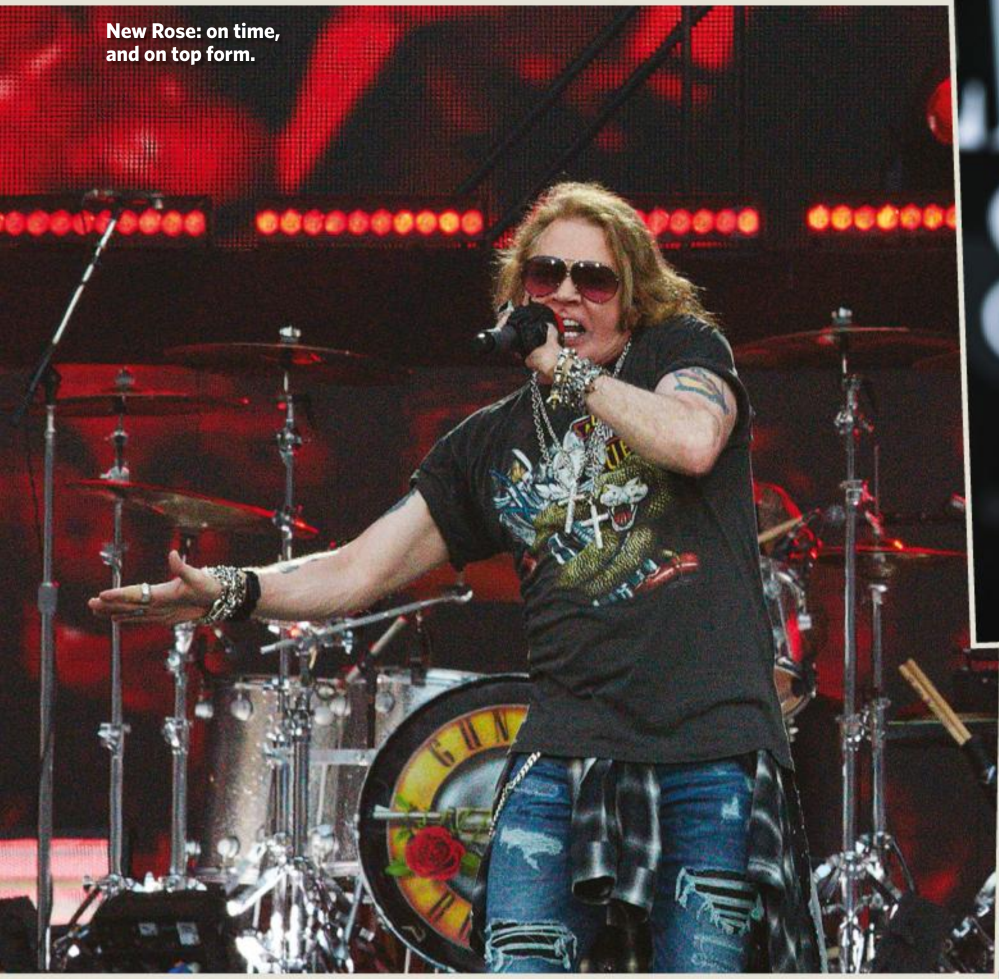
It's just over 18 months since Axl, Slash and Duff set foot on stage together for the first time since the mid-90s, but that feels like an age ago. Since then their Not In This Lifetime Tour has slowly worked its way through assorted lucrative markets before washing up on these shores, raking in upwards of $230 million and counting along the way.

But this hasn't just been about the money. Sure, it's *mostly* been about the money, but they've confounded a few expectations along the way too. For one, there's the timekeeping. The days of Axl turning up with the milkman are long gone. He's reportedly been bounding on stage on time at every date on this tour, and tonight is no exception: the tickets say 7.45pm, and that's when he appears. It almost makes you forgive him for all those long and painful hours he kept us waiting in the old days. Almost.

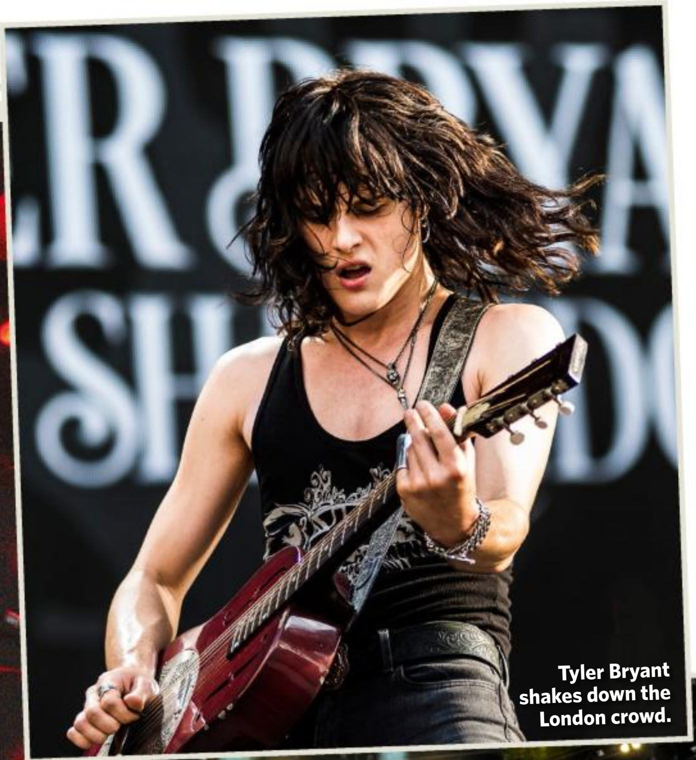
The other concern was their ability to actually pull this shit off. While Slash has replaced Lemmy as rock's seemingly ageless deity of choice, Axl is a different matter. Before the tour began, rumours circulated that he was overweight and out of shape, that his voice was shot, that a lifetime of living like a Roman emperor had sapped his rock'n'roll soul. That he's more buffalo wings than snake-hips.

Who knows if that was the case then, but it's definitely not now. Even if he wasn't match fit before, a pair of high-profile outings – subbing for Brian Johnson in AC/DC, followed by this ongoing tour – have whipped him into shape. Sure, the 55-year-old Axl barely resembles his 25-year-old self, but then who does? Apart from Slash.

Tonight there really is no dicking around. From the opening strains of the Looney Tunes theme – who



New Rose: on time, and on top form.



Tyler Bryant shakes down the London crowd.

says Axl has no sense of humour? – the band hit the stage running. Quite literally in Rose's case. The only time the man isn't in motion is when he's off stage during one of his nine – count 'em! – costume changes. There's little chat, aside from the odd wry aside and a misfiring attempt to lead the crowd in singing an ironic *Happy Birthday* to the Queen. But no one has paid a hundred-odd quid for banter.

There aren't any surprises in the set tonight. We get super-sized portions of *Appetite For Destruction* (seven songs), the *Use Your Illusion* albums (11 songs), and even three songs from *Chinese Democracy* (the venomous title track, a blinding *Better*, and an overblown *This I Love*). But then the novelty of seeing three-fifths of the classic Guns line-up is still enough of a surprise, even now.

Of course, three-fifths will never be enough for some, and if there's a ghost at the feast it's Izzy. Some might place Stradlin at the dead centre of the GN'R mythos, but tonight's he's not missed, and not just because Richard Fortus seems to have rented his hair for the tour. The truth is that no one was putting Izzy Stradlin posters up on their walls back in the day. He wasn't as volcanic as Axl, as cool as Slash, as punk rock as Duff. Sure, his songs were great, but then so were everyone else's. And let's not even get started on Steven Adler.

No, if there's anything letting the side down here, it's not who isn't here so much as what GN'R don't play during their mammoth set. We get the hits, of course – roof-raising versions *Welcome To The Jungle*, *Paradise City*, *Sweet Child O' Mine*, *You Could Be Mine* and the rest (granted, the stadium doesn't actually have a roof, but you get the drift). Drill down, though, and you can't help but wonder at some of the choices. Where *Estranged* still crackles with emotion all these years later, they're still dragging out *November Rain*, a song that couldn't be more Liberace if Axl came onstage sporting an ermine cape and 70s power-bouffant. *Coma* was an eight-minute bum note on record, and is even less interesting here. If you're going to cram in three epics, at least make one of them *Madagascar*.

More grating are the covers. *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* is practically their own song now. *Live And Let Die* is acceptable. *Whole Lotta Rosie* is pushing it, even if Axl does dedicate it to his dead dog. But eight covers – including The Damned's *New Rose*, a mawkish *Black Hole Sun* and instrumental versions of *Wish You Were Here*, the piano outro from *Layla* and the theme from *The Godfather* – is taking the piss. This is a stadium, not the lounge bar of the Holiday Inn, Poughkeepsie. How about *Right Next Door To Hell*? Or *So Fine*? Or even *Shadow Of Your Love* for those of us who have been here for the whole journey?

Still, you gets what you pays for, and for the £100-plus cover price, you get a hell of a lot. Three hours of it, to be precise. It fairly flies by, helped immeasurably by the fact that the band – and especially Axl – look like they're having a blast. By the time the fireworks go off and they take a final bow during *Paradise City*, you wonder why it took them quite so long to get back together.

What happens next is anyone's guess. The GN'R rumour mill is in perpetual motion: they're playing *Appetite For Destruction* from start to finish next time around. They'll be headlining Download 2018. They're working on a new album. But whatever happens, on tonight's evidence, it'll be way better than anyone expects.

Words: **Dave Everley**

TYLER BRYANT: WILL IRELAND; AXL ROSE + DUFF MCKAGAN: CAMERA PRESS

Cheap Trick

London Kentish Town O2 Forum

Everyone's third-favourite band play a hard-rocking set of classics and covers.

★ There might be bigger rock bands, but few are as popular with other rock bands as Cheap Trick. Anthrax have covered them, Foo Fighters and Red Hot Chili Peppers have cited them as an influence, Alice Cooper hailed them "America's house band", and Nirvana took their blueprinted marriage of Beatles melody and Black Sabbath power to a whole new audience.

"Kurt Cobain said, 'We're like Cheap Trick, only our guitars are louder,'" says Rick Nielsen, two hours before show time in a dressing room upstairs at the O2 Forum. The guitarist and principal songwriter, at 68, is still the nabob of nerd. Dressed in a suit, Cheap Trick T-shirt and trademark baseball cap, his rubbery features contort into a grimace. "I took offence at that. My guitars are pretty fuckin' loud."

Too loud for John Lennon. Nielsen and former Trick drummer Bun E Carlos (it's now Nielsen's son Daxx on the skins) were summoned by the late Beatle to work on 1980's *Double Fantasy*, but the results were deemed overly aggressive. Lennon feigned shock when Nielsen arrived at the studio – he claimed to have been expecting pop heart-throb turned country artist Rick Nelson. "He looked at me and said: 'Oh, it's you!'" recalls Nielsen,

Cheap Trick's own resident heart-throb, frontman Robin Zander – he of the golden mane and honeyed rasp – joins in, recounting a conversation between Lennon and *Double Fantasy*/early Cheap Trick producer Jack Douglas.

"Jack said to him, 'You should listen to this band – he sounds a lot like you.' John said, 'I have, and he sounds more like Paul McCartney.'"

The singer laughs. "I didn't mind that at all."

Former Beatles (even George Martin, who produced Cheap Trick's 1980 album *All Shook Up*, described them as his "favourite band to work with who weren't from Liverpool"), grunge and metal icons… Who hasn't worshipped at the CT altar? The King himself was another convert.

"Elvis came in the studio, Ardent, when we were doing our first demo in Memphis," recalls Zander, an arch Anglophile who idolised Steve Marriott and Roger Daltrey. "He was walking down the hallway and heard us performing. He said [does the Presley mumble]: 'You guys have a really good band.' It's hard to top that."

Who's left? *Classic Rock* wonders if Donald Trump might be a secret fan? Thinking of Cheap Trick's just-released eighteenth album and sensing a good promo opportunity, the ever-satirical Nielsen says: "I don't care if you're black, green, purple, yellow, white, Muslim, Jew or Catholic – buy the record."

Forty years ago, in February 1977, Cheap Trick issued their first album, an incendiary, self-titled affair featuring such staples as *Hot Love* and *He's A Whore*. Within six months came the candy-coated crunch of follow-up *In Color*, and a third, *Heaven Tonight* (featuring all-time classic *Surrender*), not long after. Meanwhile, the band were gigging every night. No wonder they were described by Kid Rock as the hardest-working band in rock'n'roll on their 2016 induction into Cleveland's Hall Of Fame.

Today, with their second album in two years just out, and a Christmas LP (of Slade, Wizzard and Strokes covers, plus originals) recorded, it seems that nothing changes. "No, it's not much different," agrees Nielsen, scrunching up his face as he looks around him, "although the dressing rooms don't smell quite as bad."

He considers his band's limited cult appeal, notwithstanding the Trickmania they enjoyed in Japan early on, and their late-80s success with US No.1 hit ballad *The Flame*. Then, ever self-deprecating, he declares: "I only ever had three wishes: I didn't want to be the best-looking guy in the world, so I got that one. I didn't want to be the richest guy in the world – I got that one. I'm still working on the third." ▷

Getting right to the point: Rick Nielsen..

Robin Zander chats to *CR*'s Paul Lester.

Bassist Tom Petersson gets in the meet-and-greet swing.

'There was always a brash, comical quality to Cheap Trick'

> ‘There are songs from all stages of their 40-year recording history’

New kid on the block: Rick Nielsen’s son Daxx on drums.

Man of *many* guitars: Rick Nielsen.

Does life in Cheap Trick today differ from in ’77?

“Not much,” replies Zander, from behind shades and a baseball cap, joking that these days he takes the mirrors down so he doesn’t have to see, at 64, his ageing mug. “It’s still four guys making fools of themselves up on stage. But we have a good time doing it. Life is hell, but we do it well! Besides, I’m too dumb to quit.”

He remembers being met at Haneda Airport in Japan by thousands of screaming locals. “We thought, ‘God, the President must be here,’” he says. “When we got off the plane we discovered it was for us. We couldn’t show our faces anywhere. We had to travel round in mail trucks with the windows all taped over.”

There were dangerous moments: an overzealous woman jumped off the balcony onto the stage, and another stabbed Zander in the neck with scissors while trying to cut off a lock of his hair.

Cheap Trick’s shtick was their sex god/geek duality. Not that either half believed the hype. Later, *Classic Rock* will bump into their other sun-kissed adonis, Tom Petersson. His long brown mane may now be greying, but he’s still handsome, and eagerly looking for a loo. “I forgot to go before,” the bassist announces. “I’ve got to piss like a racehorse.”

There was always a brash, comical quality to Cheap Trick: a sense of cartoon subterfuge not too distantly related to the warped minds behind *The Simpsons* and *South Park*.

“We’d do skits,” Zander remembers. “There was one that Rick had called The Carnival Game where a girl would come up onstage and sit on his face and he would guess her weight.”

Do their respective other halves know about this? “How,” asks Nielsen, with impressive timing, “do you think I met my wife?”

He introduces us to the long-suffering Mrs Nielsen, a glamorous lady to whom he’s been married for 46 years. Their honeymoon was in London, where they saw the band Navy Blue just days before they morphed into Jethro Tull, also an early incarnation of Yes. Then he, Zander and Petersson do a meet-and-greet, signing posters and posing for selfies.

> **“I always tell people we’ve never progressed. But we started off pretty good.”**
> Rick Nielsen

Nielsen will later reveal that he and his wife have both been recipients of the wrong kind of attention from hard-core Trick-ites. “I’ve had people come to my house and threaten me, threaten my wife, my dogs, threaten to set my house on fire, saying there’s a bomb in my car,” he confides.

Nielsen groans when told it was time to meet his public. He acknowledges the quandary: “If you’re nice to people, they won’t leave you alone, and if you’re mean to them they think you’re an asshole. So you can’t win. So I treat everybody like shit.”

He doesn’t, of course. He accommodates all comers with good humour. Is it like having to turn it on?

“In a way. Like, ‘Hey, Rick, do something funny!’”

Does he struggle to keep up the persona?

“No,” he reasons, “because that’s what I am. I was the class clown.”

He tells a story from seventh grade when he berated his music teacher and got kicked out of the school band. You wonder a little if Cheap Trick is the revenge of Rick Nielsen? Are the songs an expression of his twisted psyche?

“No, I just didn’t want to sing about love and sex – although I did like that stuff too. I wrote about what I saw in the world. Not my world, our world,” he says of his songs about serial killers, paedophiles and suicide.

“Look,” he says, “I was never going to be the pretty boy, I was never going to be Jimmy Page or

Glam fan: Michael Monroe with Tom Petersson

World of leather: Robin Zander on magnificent form.

Jeff Beck. But I was happy being myself." He pauses. "Although I wouldn't want to be around me twenty-four hours a day."

The audience seem pleased to see him following an introduction over the PA that goes, "Ladies and gentlemen, the best fucking rock band you've ever seen: Cheap Trick!"

For a group all in black, they create a polished, polychrome metal. They open with a ferocious *Hello There*, the magnificently leather-clad Zander in fine vocal fettle, Nielsen mugging for the cameras, Petersson in a wide-brimmed hat stage-right, hunched over his instrument, all the better to focus on those intricate bass lines.

There are songs from all stages of their 40-year recording history, up to and including 2017's *We're All Alright!*. During *ELO Kiddies*, Nielsen flings plectrums, from a seemingly endless supply, into the crowd. *Big Eyes* is hard and heavy, while a version of The Move's *California Man* is cause for some rare soloing from Nielsen, who has made a career out of brutal concision.

If there are any complaints, it's the surfeit of covers: Dobie Gray's *The In Crowd*, The Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Velvets' *Waiting For The Man*, and Fats Domino's *Ain't That A Shame*. Sure, they're long-established live Trick numbers, but when you've got 18 albums of rock-hard nuggets of your own, why waste a quarter of your set?

As though to prove the point, *On Top Of The World* is a barnstorming boogie, after which they launch into *The House Is Rockin' (With Domestic Problems)*, followed by *Baby Loves To Rock* and *The Ballad Of TV Violence*, all from their first-five-album golden age. Nielsen, a notorious axe fiend, swaps guitars after virtually every song, and he almost manages a Pete Townshend-style windmill/scissor-kick combo.

There isn't much moshing (it's sweltering in here), but legions of camera phones light up as punters take pictures. The sole slowie is *The Flame*, and they only decide to include that because Nielsen has heard that one of its songwriters, Nick Graham, is in the house. After that, it's pop-metallic zingers – *I Want You To Want Me*, *Dream Police*, encores of *Surrender* and *Auf Wiedersehen* – all the way to a climactic *Goodnight*.

The only sombre note is struck by *When I Wake Up Tomorrow*, which is oddly evocative of late-period David Bowie. Its lyric (*'These days I wonder how I'm gonna make it tomorrow'*) suggest mortality has crept onto Nielsen's agenda. "I think Bowie was the one where we were like, 'Woah, what?'" he says backstage afterwards, when asked which of 2016's rock deaths hit him hardest. He tells of being outside a hotel in West London the night before and there being a fire alarm, causing the hotel's guests to congregate on the pavement. The guitarist saw a world-famous musician (he won't say who on the record), and his frail appearance and deathly pallor shook him to the core.

"Man, it was frightening," he shudders. "He looked so bad. It's like Steve Jobs: you can have all the money in the world, and you're dead. I thought I looked bad!"

Classic Rock can't help noticing white powder all over the dressing room. "Jesus," Nielsen exclaims. "It's like a crime scene in here." Actually, it's baby powder. We might have known. When it comes to drink and drugs, Cheap Trick rarely, if ever, indulged. "Oh yeah, we did," he responds immediately, mildly affronted. He leans forward. "Got any drugs?"

This is shocking: we assumed they were clean-living types. "No, we were like anybody else," he admits. "Nobody is a heroin addict. And when it comes to pot, I always tell people I never exhaled. But trust me: I quit drinking 16 years ago – and God am I thirsty."

Funny guy. This could almost be a stand-up routine.

"I never drank one beer – I always had one in each hand. I never drank when I worked. But a case and a half of beer every day can't be good. I always say I never got drunk – but my mouth got drunk every day. But I was never a mean drunk. Anyway, I quit and went to the doctor's: 'God,' he said, 'your liver's great.' [Aghast] 'What?! I should have had more!'" At this point, fans – including Hanoi Rocks' Michael Monroe – pile into the dressing room to pay their respects.

It's been quite a journey. But do they foresee a long road ahead? "I don't think it's a long road," muses a glistening but exhilarated Zander, "but certainly there's no period at the end of this sentence… yet."

"I always tell people: we've never progressed. But we started off pretty good," Nielsen offers.

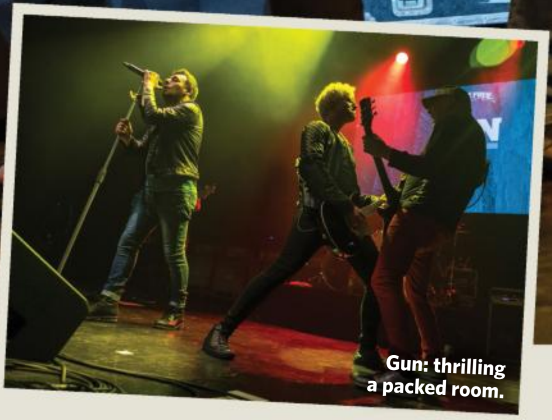
Forty-five years and counting. What's their secret?

"Work hard," Nielsen suggests, wiping himself down with a towel. "Like what you do."

Last year, he estimated to this writer that Cheap Trick were many people's third-favourite band. "I was exaggerating," he teases. "I meant fifth. We can't compete with Led Zeppelin, The Beatles or the Rolling Stones. No one is going to like us more than AC/DC. But being in the Top 10 with these groups is fine by me."

Words: **Paul Lester** Photos: **Will Ireland**

Cult classics: the Öyster men hit superb form.



Gun: thrilling a packed room.

Stone Free Festival

London O2 Arena

A mixed bag of young guns and veteran rockers take over London's O2 Arena for the second outing of the indoor festival.

★ It must feel like the fates are colluding against you when you announce a one-day festival in east London and Guns N' Roses decide to pitch their tent just down the road with an extra night of their Not In This Lifetime tour at the London Stadium. It's like ordering a clown for your kid's birthday party and then realising that next door have gone the whole hog and hired a bouncy castle and one of the cast of the *Teletubbies*. Cue jumbled Tube carriages on the Jubilee Line (which leads to both The O2 and the London Stadium) shuttling their heavy metal cargo – Rainbow, Blue Öyster Cult factions here, Slash and GN'R T-shirts over there – to their respective destinations. To Stone Free's credit, it doesn't look like they've taken too much of a hit – the paved concourse outside The O2 Arena is populated with men in fading tour merch and ladies in straw cowboy hats, all clutching plastic glasses of cider. Blink and you could be in a less muddy Download on a Sunday night.

Indoors, which must confuse the hell out of the casual O2 visitor who might have popped in to see the latest instalment of the *Transformers* franchise, is a vinyl fair and bands tearing it up on the so-called Big Entrance Stage. Young mothers, laden down with mewling children, a Starbucks, a pushchair and an affixed disapproving stare, push on past the hordes and into the heart of the arena, though presumably not to try any of the number of comedians and talks in the upper reaches of the building, or the Indigo stage where bands such as Gun and The Answer are thrilling chokingly full rooms.

A little too full when it comes to Indigo headliners Blue Öyster Cult. So popular are the band made forever infamous by Will Ferrell on *Saturday Night Live* that the queue stretches around the theatre and out of sight. It's a strict one-out-one-in policy, much to the chagrin of a parade of (rightly) furious punters.

Inside, the newly slimmed down and recently shaved BÖC are on rare form. It's packed from front to back as the band run through their debut album in full. The haunting *Then Came The Last Days Of May* and the electric *Cities On Flame With Rock And Roll* are so good that grown men look like they might

'Ritchie Blackmore sucks all the goodwill from the room.'

Sweet sensations: bar-room boogie meets arena rock.

Mistreated: Ronnie Romero fronting Blackmore's Rainbow.

Ritchie Blackmore: black of clothes and mood.

The Answer's Cormac Neeson.

swoon. Sadly, there's no time for *Flaming Telepaths* or *Shooting Shark*, but it's hard to grumble when *Burnin' For You* has just rattled your bridgework.

And so to the main event in the cavernous 18,000 capacity arena. Sweet have the unenviable job of warming up for Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow, but even if the main room is curtained off at the rear, this incarnation of the band manages to fill up at least half the floor space and a generous number of seats heading up to the eaves. It's hard to know what to make of Sweet in this day and age, with a singer who, from a distance, could be REO's Kevin Cronin, and last original man standing, the droll and entertaining Andy Scott. They ruin *Love Is Like Oxygen* by segueing into ELP's *Fanfare For The Common Man*, and look terribly pleased with themselves for doing so, but the response is the kind of full-throated roar reserved for a Kiss encore.

These days Sweet are a strange anomaly – clearly the best kind of bar band, they can talk all they like about their evolution, but if they played a better song tonight than *Fox On The Run* then *CR* must have missed it. That said, if their best years are behind them (and they are), then they ascended to playing an arena set with aplomb, even without the production bells and whistles this kind of show usually merits.

'Blue Öyster Cult are so good that grown men look like they might swoon.'

Which is more than can be said of the man in black. With a band that wear a constant mask of uncertain fear, as if Blackmore has their respective families held hostage somewhere and one gesture from the guitarist might seal their doom forever. Ritchie's clearly past caring. There's no set list, the singer informs us nervously, twitching like a dog that's been kicked one too many times, and no real stage show. The giant video screen behind the band and a line of what look like practice amps flicker into occasional life, like a vintage VHS machine running old pictures of Ritchie and Ronnie James Dio in what must have been happier times – it's hard to tell from their expressions.

Ritchie remains tethered to his spot near the drum riser, dressed all in black and comfortable shoes. It's not clear if he even knows the audience are there – he certainly doesn't acknowledge them. At one point the spotlight shifts towards the lip of the stage, as if the guitarist might inch forward, but he shrugs the beam of light off and stands stock still, presumably marvelling at his own fretwork.

The special surprise guest of the night is the ageless Russ Ballard, who you presume was meant to be a late highlight of the show until Ritchie, with an odd combination of shifting eyebrows and an admonishing finger (not a word uttered), instructs his singer to get Russ on early. Consequently, *Since You Been Gone* is a spark of rare fire in a sea of diminishing returns.

That said, it's hard to fault the mellifluous solo on *Mistreated* or the thunder that *Man On The Silver Mountain* brings, but each time you grasp for the nettle of hope, Blackmore slinks off out of sight (he stays off stage for so long during the keyboard solo that the organist appears to run out of music to play) and sucks all the goodwill from the room, probably smirking to himself as he does so.

Which is pretty much as he leaves it, sloping shoulders eventually returning to the darkness as the house lights rise, no doubt picking up his cheque as he goes, the door slamming shut behind him with one last defiant bang.

Words: **Philip Wilding** Photos: **Kevin Nixon**

'Vital music played by six guys who believe that change is possible.'

Prophets Of Rage

Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Rap and metal collective soundtrack two hours of balls-out fun.

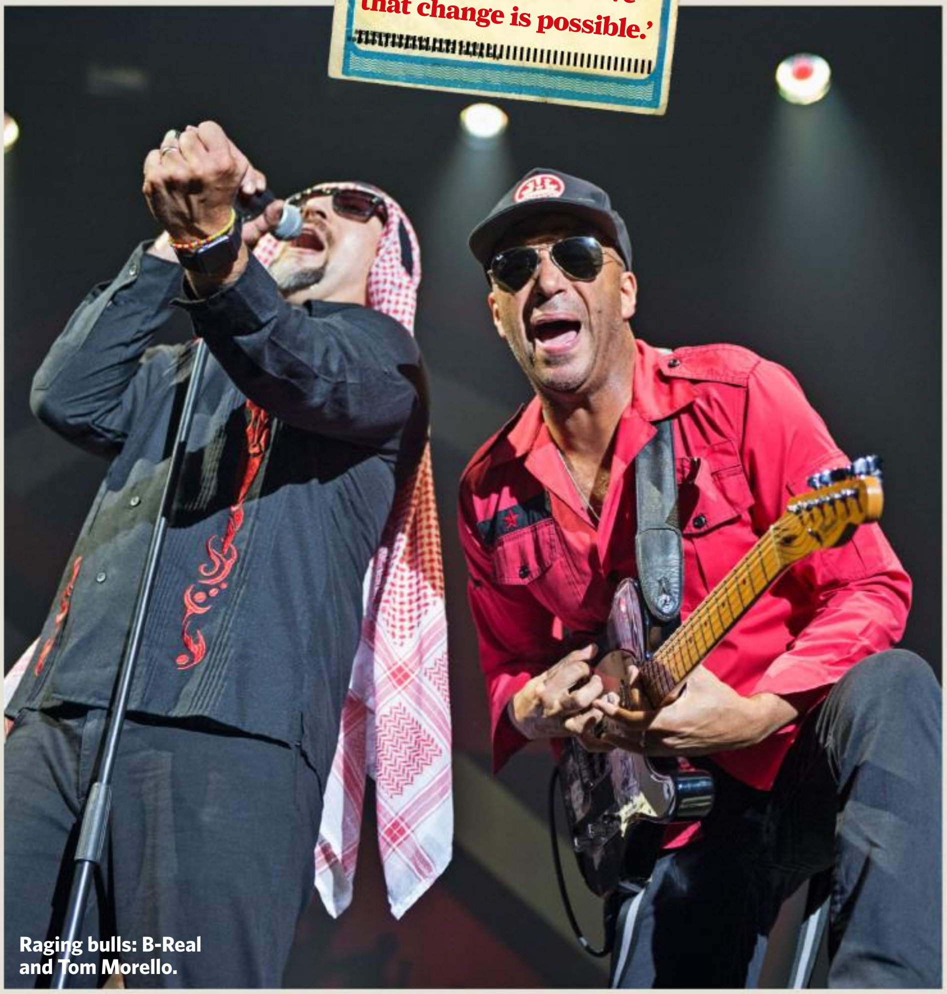
In the sleepy town of Esch-sur-Alzette in south-west Luxembourg, something is stirring. Something is moving. Something is *raging*. And it's not the biblically hot weather threatening to melt our skin straight off the bone.

Inside the super-modern, warehouse-like Rockhal, thousands of bodies from all walks of life have gathered to witness the strength of rock and hip-hop working as one. From DJ Lord's 15-minute intro set (blasting out everything from Slayer to KRS-One) to the climactic *Killing In The Name* crescendo, this is two hours of pure, unadulterated fun.

Despite the metal and rap legends on stage in the form of Tom Morello and Chuck D, the floor is closer to an old-school hardcore punk gig, bodies bouncing and hurling over each other, pints flying through the air, everyone connected as one to music that has the power to change the world. The RATM big hitters of *Testify*, *Guerrilla Radio* and *Bulls On Parade* still have the power to shake a building to its foundations, and Prophets newie *Unfuck The World* has already become a battle cry for a generation of miscreants who are sick of the societal and political climate we currently find ourselves in. Couple this with a classic hip-hop medley fronted by Chuck D and B-Real – ending with a floor-wobbling rendition of House Of Pain's *Jump Around* – and you can feel the air physically buzzing with adrenalin, sweat and elation.

No, this isn't Rage Against The Machine, but this is vital music played by six guys who believe that change is possible. All hell can't stop them now.

Luke Morton



Raging bulls: B-Real and Tom Morello.

Bash & Pop

London Islington The Garage

Former Replacements bassist Tommy Stinson and co. play a gig to remember.

It's chaos. Before *Bad News*, Tommy Stinson carefully attaches a capo to the neck of his guitar, immediately discards it as the first chords ring out, then stops the song altogether before cackling gleefully and restarting. During *First Steps* he forgets the lyrics. And towards the end of a buoyant if somewhat disorganised set, the former Replacement leads the audience in a chorus of *Happy Birthday* dedicated to guitarist Steve Selvidge as a cake is brought on stage, before uttering "you fucking c**t" as the chorus fades.

It's also glorious. When the band hit their stride, which they do as soon as they get past the first few bars of each song, they're absolutely unstoppable. Former Mighty Mighty Bosstones drummer Joe Sirois is at the root of it all, spending the set beating the living daylights out of his kit with precision, a thrilled grin on his face. There's an incandescent version of The Who's *The Kids Are Alright*, and *Anything Could Happen* is genuinely uplifting. After The Only Ones' duo of singer Peter Perrett and guitarist John Perry join the party for a carefree scamper through that band's classic *Another Girl, Another Planet*, Stinson thanks them, saying: "That meant the world to me", and it feels like a genuine moment of deep personal joy rather than just another road-warrior platitude.

For a gig so shamefully under-attended, this was pretty special.

Fraser Lewry

Mark Lanegan

London Camden Koko

We left our heart in dark Mark's disco.

Mark Lanegan's transition from a frequently uncomfortable and pinned performer of gothic blues to a confident singer of gothic electro blues informed by the guiding hand of prime-time New Order and the kosmische of Krautrock is now complete. His tar-stained baritone remains a thing of dependable wonder, and with it comes a newfound love of performing that is both palpable and infectious.

Tonight's encouraging gender split suggests that this singer of the dark is the stuff of date nights, and with a healthy proportion of the audience actually dancing on this sultry night, Lanegan has half the battle won.

Crucially, he has joined that rarified space occupied by seasoned performers whose current material is what actually the drives the agenda. There's no laurel-resting here, and with the bulk of the set made up of songs from the albums he's released from *Blues Funeral* through to *Gargoyle*, Lanegan and his well- drilled band aim squarely for the hips without sacrificing any of his customary intensity.

Death's Head Tattoo merges menace with movement, while *Nocturne* and *Floor Of The Ocean* encapsulate perfectly his current aesthetic. Bodies sway in time to the forceful and seductive delivery. Elsewhere, convincing covers of Joy Division *Atmosphere* and *Love Will Tear Us Apart*, display where he's at.

This is Mark Lanegan's imperial period and long may it last.

Julian Marszalek

King's X

London Islington Assembly Hall

Texan trio still have the X factor.

Back in the late 80s/early 90s, many thought King's X could, and indeed should, have been huge. Quite why that never happened remains perplexing and open to conjecture; they were in the right place, at the right time, with the right music both on record and in performance. But, like most 'cult' bands, they built a fiercely devoted following. On one occasion between songs, vocalist/bassist Dug Pinnick makes a reference to the recent terrorist atrocities. On another there's a swelling audience chant of "Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!" a reach-out to drummer Jerry Gaskill who survived two heart attacks. Both are clearly heart-felt.

Tonight it's evident even right from the off that the UK branch of that following has sustained, and it becomes increasingly evident with each song that King's X still have whatever the X factor was that made this Texan trio special in the first place. Fan favourites (most of the set) including *The World Around Me, Dogman, Summerland, We Were Born To Be Loved* and *Over My Head* are performed with a potent mix of power and precision, while at any and every opportunity the audience join in enthusiastically with word-perfect choruses; set-closer *Goldilox* is completely audience-sung, while the band appear genuinely thrilled by the spontaneity and depth of the audience participation.

King's X might have missed to boat in terms of fame and fortune, but in other ways their ship still comes in every time they play.

Paul Henderson

JOHN MCMURTRIE

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HELLOWEEN

Last issue, thanks to a technical gremlin the last page of our **Helloween** feature somehow got spirited out of the magazine. So for anyone who missed the ending of that story, or didn't get the last issue at all, here it is again in full.

Words: **Dave Everley**

A few weeks ago, Kai Hansen listened to Helloween's *Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part I* and *II* albums for the first time in a while. He thought they were awesome. "No, *fucking* awesome," says the man who co-founded the most successful heavy metal band that Germany has ever produced (who aren't called the Scorpions).

It's slightly surprising that he speaks so proudly of the twin pinnacles of his former group's career, released within 15 months of each other in 1987 and 1988. Those two records stand among the finest heavy metal albums from that glorious decade, and their influence can be heard in every band that followed who dared to dream big, from DragonForce through to Nightwish.

But the triumph of the *Keeper Of The Seven Keys* albums was short-lived. The line-up that recorded them splintered shortly after the release of *Part II*, sparking years of bitterness, public antagonism and even, indirectly, a tragic death. It was a long and most un-Germanic soap opera.

As with so many soap operas, there's a twist. In this case it's that the estranged members of the *Keeper*-era line-up have put aside their many differences and merged with the band's current one for the most unexpected reunion of the year.

"We're not as big as Iron Maiden, but I think we're way bigger than Spinal Tap," says guitarist and band co-founder Michael Weikath, a man with a unique sense of humour. "I guess we never sucked so much that people said: 'We've had enough of these crappy Germans.'"

From the vantage point of 2017, it might be difficult to comprehend why a Helloween reunion (or whatever you want to call it) is such a big deal beyond the pull of 80s heavy metal nostalgia. But that undersells just how important the band were – or could have been. On the two *Keeper Of The Seven Keys* albums, Helloween touched the hem of greatness. They were the heirs apparent of Iron Maiden, Judas Priest and the Scorpions, before it all went so badly and perplexingly wrong.

Today, Hansen, Weikath and singer Michael Kiske all look back on those days with a mixture of fondness, regret and the kind of 'I was right, dammit' stubbornness that you suspect caused all the trouble in the first place. There's still a whiff of caution in the air, as if it could all easily fly off the rails again.

According to both Kiske and Weikath, Hansen was the driving force behind this reunion. He was the peacemaker, the one whose nagging determination eventually brought the warring parties together. "It's always Kai," says Kiske.

Even at the other end of a phone line, Hansen exudes energy, rattling off his version of events in fluent English. During the band's early days he was an impish livewire next to Weikath's glowering dark lord.

When Hansen co-founded Helloween with Weikath in Hamburg in 1984, their ambition was to become as big as the Scorpions. Their early records were fast and brittle, a distinctly European take on American thrash. Hansen was the vocalist on the band's self-titled debut EP and their first album, *Walls Of Jericho*, before deciding that playing guitar and singing was more trouble than it was worth.

"I never considered myself a singer," he says. "I was a shouter. And I wasn't disciplined. Drinking and smoking lots doesn't help you sing well."

There was just 18 months between *Walls Of Jericho* and *Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part I*, but a huge evolutionary gulf separated them. Where *Walls* was energetic but callow, the first *Keeper* album was magnificently ambitious, matching the grand heavy metal operatics of Iron Maiden while injecting them with a shot of youth and humour. This change was partly down to the presence of newcomer Kiske, whose incredible vocal range matched the band's freshly expanded musical horizons.

"Michael Kiske was a very strong character, even at the start," says Hansen. "Very opinionated. He wasn't the sort of guy you would tell: 'Hey, sing this.' If he didn't like something, he'd say: 'No, that's bullshit, I don't like it.'"

The band had already started writing *Keeper Of The Seven Keys* before Kiske joined, but he strengthened what they were doing – although they weren't so strong as to get away with releasing a double album, which was the original plan before their label, Noise, nipped the idea in the bud.

Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part I was released in May 1987. In the year after Metallica's *Master Of Puppets* and Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet*, Helloween stood apart. *Keeper* songs such as *Future World* and *Twilight Of The Gods* were the sound of Rainbow on steroids, of Iron Maiden and Judas Priest soundtracking the most epic game of *Dungeons & Dragons* imaginable. This bombastic new sound would eventually be given a name: power metal.

"I didn't have the feeling we were creating something new," says Hansen dismissively. "Nobody knew that term 'power metal' at the time. It was like: 'What the fuck? This is heavy metal.' It still is. I mean, what the fuck *is* power metal?"

Whether they liked it or not, power metal was a thing, and Helloween owned the road. No sooner had they released *Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part I* to great acclaim, they followed it up with a sequel.

Keeper Part II was more direct than its predecessor, but no less effective. In *Eagle Fly Free* and the endearing comedy-horror piss-take *Dr Stein*, it included a pair of instant classics. But it was Hansen's *I Want Out* that was the album's most fascinating song. In it, the guitarist very publically laid out his disillusion with life as a member of Helloween.

"It was a statement, yeah," he says. "It wasn't just wanting out of the band, it was a general thing relating to everything that was going on: poor management, other people telling us where to be and what to do, never-ending internal discussions… I just wanted to rock."

Hansen says divisions were starting to open up in the band. "There was Ingo [Schwichtenberg, drummer], Markus [Grosskopf, bassist] and me, and then there was Michael and Michael – which was weird considering how it all turned out," he says. "But even then they would argue with each other. I've seen them sitting in the tour bus, arguing for hours about whether egg yolk is healthy or not. And they'd be the same with music. Weikath would say: 'Guys, we need to be more like The Beatles,' and I was like: 'You want me to play that? No…' And then Kiske would be: 'We need to be more like Elvis.'"

In the end, Hansen was as good as his word. Shortly after *Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part II* was released, he did indeed quit Helloween. He says his bandmates tried to change his mind, but it was half-hearted.

"Weiki put some kind of glasses on Kiske, saying Kai is like this, Kai is like that," he says. "When Kiske started to realise I wasn't like that, it was the point where I'd made up my mind."

Hansen's departure was a tipping point for Helloween. They carried on without him – the success of the two *Keeper* albums had turned them into metal's Next Big Things. But it was the beginning of the end for the band's classic line-up, and the start of bad blood that would last nearly 30 years.

Michael Kiske can remember exactly where he was when he got the call to join Helloween: in the bath at his parents' house. He was barely 18 at the time, just out of school. His band, Ill Prophecy, were causing ripples on the Hamburg scene. Helloween had already approached him once about joining but he had knocked them back.

"I listened to *Walls Of Jericho* and I didn't like it very much," says Kiske, with only a slight trace of a German accent. "But then Weiki called. He was saying the right things: we want to do more, we want to extend, we need a singer like you. They wrote the songs on *Keeper* for me."

Kiske admits that he was a cocky 18-year-old, and he's no less assured as a 49-year-old. Despite his remarkable voice, he never trained as a singer. "No, no, I was always able to figure it out myself," he says. "I'm always like that with everything."

Kiske's confidence was a good fit for Helloween. The whole band knew they were on to something special with *Keeper Of The Seven Keys*.

"We were fearless," he says. "I always thought we would be successful. When the first *Keeper* record came out and sold, like, a million copies, I wasn't surprised. John Lennon said: 'The Beatles thought we were the fucking best band in the world, and that's what made us as big as we were.' And I understand what he means. It's not arrogance – you just don't doubt yourself."

Helloween weren't The Beatles, but they were on course to become stars in the late-80s heavy metal firmament. Both *Keeper* albums were huge hits in Germany, and the band were making inroads into the British market too. And then Kai Hansen left.

"Kai has his own way of how he looks at that

situation," says Kiske. "In my opinion he was projecting problems he had in his own life on to what happened. Yes, there were arguments, but in general everybody was having a good time. When he left I didn't even think it would be such a big deal – that's how naïve I was. He was part of it, but he was an important part – he was not the band, like some people like to tell him. But as soon as he wasn't there any more the whole spirit was different. It turned into a nightmare."

What happened next was a textbook example of a band snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. After the highs of the two *Keeper* albums, Helloween made a series of epic artistic missteps. Their first post-Hansen album, 1991's *Pink Bubbles Go Ape*, was woeful, its awfulness best summed up by the fact it featured a track titled *Heavy Metal Hamsters*. "The whole situation was bad," says Kiske. "We spent a fortune in a studio in Denmark, but there was no inspiration."

1993's *Chameleon* was marginally better, but the band's diversion away from the sound that had made them famous alienated a large chunk of their fanbase.

By then it was over for Kiske anyway. His relationship with Weikath was broken beyond repair. Those tour-bus arguments about the health benefits of egg yolk had escalated into something much more poisonous.

"I wanted to get out but I didn't have the guts to leave," he says. "They fired me, but before that happened I made certain statements to push them to it. I had a conversation with Roland [Grapow, Hansen's eventual replacement], going: 'I think after this record I'm going to leave.' When you say things like that, what do you expect to happen?"

Kiske left Helloween in 1993. There were rumours that he was going to join Iron Maiden, but they proved false ("It was never an option – Iron Maiden fans wouldn't accept a German singer"). Instead he embarked on a career that found him experimenting with alternative rock, AOR – everything, it seems, apart from heavy metal. "I was pissed," he says. "I had hurt feelings. I just didn't want anything to do with it."

But try as he might, he couldn't escape the shadow of his old band. Weikath claimed his former bandmate had deliberately turned his back on heavy metal while he was still in the band – a cardinal sin in the eyes of Helloween fans.

"I felt mistreated," he says, sounding wounded by the memory even now. "Especially because of how they sold the situation to the public. It was just the flak they put out because it looks good to the fans. But we were young, nobody tells you what to do. There isn't a rule book for being in a band."

Michael Weikath has been depicted as the chief antagonist in the break-up of Helloween's best-known line-up, mainly by Michael Kiske. The man Hansen refers to as "Count Weikath" due to his habit of working at night is certainly an odd character. Talking to him via Skype is an interesting experience. He digresses wildly, and ends selected sentences with the word "right?", as if daring you to challenge what he says. Early on he interrupts the interview to answer the call of nature. "I went to a café earlier and had a few coffees," he says on his return.

But painting him as the villain of the piece undersells his role in the band he helped put together and has steered ever since. After the departure of Kiske, Weikath could have folded Helloween. Instead he continued, not just steadying the wagon but pushing it ever onwards. He was responsible for some of the best moments on the two *Keeper* records, among them *A Tale That Wasn't Right* and *Eagle Fly Free*. Still, he doesn't seem hugely happy looking back on that period. During the recording of the first *Keeper* album, he says had a bad drug experience that affected his participation.

"I smoked some bad weed and there was DDT in there," he says. "I had lots of trouble. I was panicking, my heart was racing, right? I couldn't freakin' play any rhythm guitar on *Keeper 1* because my fingers were shaking. All I did was solos and melody guitars. I felt like a freakin' idiot. But they didn't fire me. That's kind of nice."

Ironically, Weikath would later be responsible for firing a few people himself. "But not Kai Hansen. He wanted to leave, but I was very pro-him leaving because things weren't working so great. As a band we couldn't be good friends. You know why? Because we had no money and we had no iPhones, right? If we had those we would have been great friends and everything would have worked out."

Weikath takes his share of the blame for the dissolution of the *Keeper*-era line-up. "I was pestering the poor guys with my fucking ideologies: 'We should be more commercial,' and whatever. I was such a dick. But I was just thinking: 'Okay, we've got this success, let's do something with it.'" Then he asks: "You spoke to Michael Kiske? What did he tell you?"

He was philosophical. He basically said you were all young, there was no rule book to follow.

"Right, right. I wouldn't think he lied to you or made it up. We are far beyond that."

But there was bad blood between you and him before he left. Where did it all go wrong?

"When we recorded *Pink Bubbles*. He became interested in these philosophical things, and he was talking about astral bodies and stuff. And he turned vegetarian. He would say: 'The meat you are eating, you should know that the poor animal had to die for that, miserably.' 'Yeah, I know. Can I eat my steak now please? And would you shut the fuck up?' The whole thing was broken."

"I didn't have the feeling we were creating something new. Nobody knew that term 'power metal' at the time."
KAI HANSEN

Kiske wasn't the only one ousted from Helloween during that time. Ingo Schwichtenberg was the band's drummer from the beginning. Every photo shows him with a smile on his face. In reality he was troubled man, prone to schizophrenic episodes, including bouts of uncontrolled sobbing and hearing voices. His mental issues, exacerbated by drug and alcohol use, became increasingly problematic, and he was fired from the band in 1993. Two years later he committed suicide by throwing himself under a train. He was 29.

Hansen remembers Schwichtenberg as "true and nice, a loyal friend", though the guitarist admits he blamed himself for the drummer's death: "Like, my having left made him crack in some way." Both he and Kiske later wrote tributes to their former colleague in their respective bands.

Once again Weikath was the man in the hot seat. He says the stress contributed to "a kind of nervous breakdown – I slept every day for, like, fifteen hours". But he says he was never tempted to shut the band down. Instead he brought in a new singer, Andi Deris, and steady stream of drummers and guitarists. "We had a few successful singles, and the concerts were freakin' successful," he says. "The fans were always there. They helped us through all that crap."

Helloween survived and prospered thanks to Weikath's grim determination. They even made a third album in the series, 2005's decent *Keeper Of The Seven Keys: The Legacy*. But they would never again come as close to a proper mainstream breakthrough.

Michael Kiske's friendship with Kai Hansen never really deteriorated to the point of no return. In 1995 he guested on an album by Hansen's band Gamma Ray, and the pair properly reunited in Unisonic.

Kiske's relationship with Michael Weikath was a different matter. The "crap" the guitarist refers to played out in the press over the next two decades. Every interview with either of them would bring up the possibility of Helloween's classic line-up reuniting. Weikath would say the ball was in Kiske's court; Kiske would dismiss it. And then both parties found themselves booked on the bill at the Sweden Rocks festival in 2013.

"I ran into Michael backstage," says Kiske. "I wasn't even thinking about it. But suddenly he was standing in front of me. He said: 'What have I done that you can't forgive me?' And that was just the perfect thing to say. I said: 'I think I have forgiven you a long time ago.' And that was how I felt – the anger had gone."

"I was kind of nervous," says Weikath. "I had a Jackie Daniel's [sic] in one hand, another Jackie Daniel's in the other with the bottle and a cigarette, and another cigarette in my mouth."

The pair talked in private in a dressing room, apparently settling their differences. But Kiske says he didn't consider a reunion of any sort until at least a year later. "We'd just played some shows in Spain with Unisonic. We were getting changed backstage, getting out of our clothes, and Kai said: 'If we don't ever do anything under the name of Helloween again, we're just idiots.' And I said: 'You know what? I'm open.'"

The various parties proceeded with caution. There were conversations on Skype, further meetings to clear the air ("Were any apologies made?" says Kiske. "I don't think we need to go into that"). Then towards the end of 2016 it was announced that the surviving members of the line-up that recorded the two *Keeper Of The Seven Keys* albums would be merging with the current Helloween line-up for a tour. "Yeah, it's kind of strange," says Kiske. "But it's good strange."

The latest incarnation of Helloween isn't even called Helloween – it's called Pumpkins United, although no one can offer a clear explanation why. They plan to play songs from all eras of the band, mixing and matching the line-ups, but it's the Kiske-fronted *Keeper* material that will inevitably draw the most attention.

"It's an experiment," says Weikath. "We don't know what's going to happen. Maybe everyone's going to say: 'This fucking sucks. I'm out of it.'"

Whether it turns out to be temporary or permanent, the return of the original power metal band is a welcome development – not least to its members, current and former.

"There was a time when I hated to admit how important Helloween was," says Kiske. "I was suffering for a number of years, and I couldn't understand why people who liked the band were so frustrated. But I can't blame them any more. It's the mothership."

Pumpkins United play the O2 Academy Brixton in London on November 14.

Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

Mike Portnoy on his former band Dream Theater, regret, alcoholism, and choosing between Rush and Macca.

Interview: **Dave Ling**

Mike Portnoy co-founded the progressive-metal heavyweights Dream Theater in 1985. Having left the band after 25 years with them, the drummer's extensive CV now includes work with Transatlantic, Neal Morse, the Winery Dogs, Avenged Sevenfold, Twisted Sister, Adrenaline Mob, Flying Colors, Metal Allegiance and many more.

What can Mike Portnoy do that nobody else can?
I can juggle eighty-seven bands at once.

Have you ever felt guilt over stretching yourself too thinly?
My God, I promise you that's never been the case. If I couldn't do it, then I wouldn't. But I really can. I would feel short-changed being in only one band, but I guess not everyone's a workaholic like I am. To me it's like acting: why play one role for the rest of your life?

Were you a good student?
Hell no. I even got thrown out of the one class I was good at – music – for showboating. But at my high-school graduation, after years of being belittled by the music teacher, he awarded me the top scholarship the school had to offer.

You met future bandmates John Petrucci and John Myung at Berklee College Of Music. What were your first impressions of them as eighteen-year-olds?
John Petrucci reminded me of myself in many ways. He was a typical Long Island upper-middle-classic music nut. John Myung remains the same right to the present day – quiet and introverted, with his bass strapped on at all times.

What's the worst day job you ever had?
In the summer of 1983 I worked three jobs to pay for my drum kit. The worst of those was being a shit-picker. I walked up and down Long Beach cleaning up, quite literally, shit.

When did you realise you had a problem with alcohol?
I knew many years before I quit. I would spend my entire day thinking about drinking. It became all-consuming, and I recognised that but I carried on anyway until seventeen years ago.

What were your thoughts on that day in 2010 when at a Dream Theater band meeting you proposed a hiatus that the others opposed?
Believe it or not, I wasn't feeling sad. Nothing bad had led to my proposal, though the outcome was completely blown out of proportion by the internet. Those guys begged me to reconsider and stay. But there was no animosity between us.

What have the last seven years out of Dream Theater taught you?
From the aftermath of my exit I learned that any innocent little comment can be twisted to make it seem something that it isn't. That was so disheartening. Even right now I'm tiptoeing around [laughs]. But in a broader sense I've no regrets. I've done everything that I could possibly have dreamed of doing – times ten.

"Hearing Dream Theater without me still hurts."

Do you believe in God?
There's a higher power of some sort that guides the universe. That was a big part of my sobriety – needing something beyond myself to help guide me.

A Mike Mangini-era Dream Theater song comes on the radio. Do you change the channel?
Out of curiosity I will listen for about thirty seconds, and then change the channel. That's not a statement based on quality. Hearing that band without me still hurts. Whenever I read about something they're doing, that's painful to me. It's like seeing an ex-wife with a new husband.

And would you ever go back to that same ex-wife?
I've no longing or intention to do that, but if the opportunity arose and I was available then I'd do it without question. I still love the guys and look back on those days with a great deal of sentimentality.

What is the biggest misconception about you?
I have a rap for being a control freak. That's been true in many areas of my life, but I'm also extremely content as a team player and, as my spells with Twisted Sister or Avenged Sevenfold both proved, I can also be a hired gun.

Rush invite you to play drums with them on a tour, but Paul McCartney wants you for his new solo record. Which do you choose?
Geddy and Alex want me for a tour, right? That would be the deal-sealer, as I love playing on stage. Aaarg… what am I saying? Turning down Paul McCartney? That's the hardest question I've ever been asked in my life! Hey, I'm Mike Portnoy… I can do both.

What will be written on your tombstone?
I've no funny answer to that. The real response is that after losing my mum in a plane crash, I live day to day by the motto of 'carpe diem' [Latin for 'seize the day']. Life really should be lived to the fullest as it can be gone in a flash.

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